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MRS. SARAH NORTON;

A N

Illustration of Practical Piety.

B Y

SAMUEL D. BALDWIN.

Nashville, Tenn.:

PUBLISHED BY J. B. McFERRIN, AGENT,

FOR THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH.

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LIFE OF MRS. NORTON.



# LIFE OF MRS. SARAH NORTON.

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## CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION—EARLY LIFE OF MRS. NORTON—EARLY METHODISTS—REASONS FOR BEING A METHODIST—CHURCH GOVERNMENT MILITARY IN STRUCTURE—BAPTISM BY POURING—THE LORD'S SUPPER AND HER MEDITATIONS AND HOPES—FASTING: ITS USES AND PHILOSOPHY—CLASS-MEETINGS.

EARTH is not our home. We are journeying to a land of angels. The Christian will soon be there. How blest that country! how charming its inhabitants! Could we unveil their glories, our pilgrimage would lose its sorrows in the blooming prospect, and our weary feet flame with ardor to scale the heights before us.

“That holy world is ever bright  
With a pure radiance all its own;  
And streams of uncreated light  
Flow round it from the eternal throne.  
There forms that mortals may not see,  
Too glorious for the eye to trace,  
And clad in peerless majesty,  
Move with unutterable grace.”

To know when first Omnipotence laid the foundations of eternal realms, when wings of light first

shook the heavenly hills and marshalled all the morning stars from night, would be a blissful privilege. And could we read the biography of a seraph, could we trace his early hours and prime, and his vicissitudes from his birth down eternity's highway, and view in full his person, heart, and history, our interest would grow with every page, and fadeless glory would remain upon the fascinated memory. But there will come a period in the Christian's history when his childhood and his earthly years will swell in interest beyond the story of the firstborn sons of light. An age will yet arrive when Adam and his latest son will seem the creatures of a single hour; when saints and angels will appear as offspring of the self-same day. The stars, though larger than ten thousand globes like ours, by distance are but points of light: their diverse magnitudes are indiscriminately lost through boundless distance. Creatures though born apart through the extremes of twice ten thousand cycles of the stars, will, at the end of cycles yet beyond, all sink to the diameter of a single moment. Then saints and angels will be of the same comparative age. Then will the Christian fill a sublimer sphere than they who never "fought to win the prize, nor sailed through bloody seas."

A Christian is the strangest character in the



universe—an anomaly in the empire of Divinity. The strongest interests centre in him, and the most awful events cluster around him. He is nearer to God than the seraphs; he is the only redeemed creature; the only one whose nature God has assumed; the only one for whom God's only Son was ever sacrificed. By the stupid world around him he may be regarded with pity as deluded and visionary; but though undistinguished from men by any external insignia, he yet has God for his father, and heaven for his home; and his present humility will splendidly heighten the glory that shall be revealed in him when his conflicts are ended. The biography of the Christian's future will be the more striking by antithesis with his past: the heavenly will be the brighter from the obscurity of the earthly. However less brilliant than those of military chieftains, his heroism and conquests will yet shine with a lustre for ever augmenting, while the memory of man's destroyers shall dissolve like smoke from a conflagration. The fellow-heirs of the same destiny are mutual objects of affection and affiliation, of admiration and of example. Whatever may be the faults or the disasters that attach to the probationer, the veil of charity is always ready to cover the one, and the heart of sympathy to commiserate the other.

Personally, Christians may be strangers; but

they are yet kindred by ties the most endearing. They may contend under diverse local standards, but they are militant under the same Captain; they may be called by various tribal names, but they speak alike the language of the same Canaan. Filling different stations of life; abiding in the palace or in the cottage; bereft of education or polished by learning; moving in the circles of fashion or among the walks of the lowly; tempted by the enchantments of riches or the sorcery of poverty—they alike love one another—labor for one destiny—contend for the same mastery, and, having overcome, they alike “ascribe their conquests to the Lamb, their triumphs to his death.” The life of all such is worthy of careful record, and all are written in the Book of Life. But as one star differs from another in glory, and as in various skies the larger ones are the more perspicuous guides to the benighted wanderer, so there are Christians whose light has been of the first magnitude in various ranks of life, whose memory should be stereotyped upon the chart of the Christian pilgrimage, that others on the wastes of time and sin may follow them to Bethlehem, to Calvary, and heaven. Among such luminaries we mention one, no more of earth, to whose calm and unobtrusive light and life we kindly ask an hour’s devotion. We present no glaring character; no model of eccentricity; no

Christian poet, orator, or prodigy ; but a faithful, practical exemplar of modest, womanly piety, in the person of Mrs. Sarah Norton.

Biography is the most difficult of compositions to execute with satisfaction to the living or justice to the dead ; and with a pen unskilled in portraiture, we fear to write ; but love constrains, and we proceed.

MRS. SARAH NORTON was born in York county, Pennsylvania, September 2, 1790 : her maiden name was Sarah Low. While a child she lost her father, and when eight years old her mother removed to Williamsport, in Lycoming county, and there died, leaving Sarah an orphan at the age of nine years. She then returned to York, and there, in 1807, was united in marriage to Mr. John Norton, also of Pennsylvania, but a resident of Louisville, Ky.

During her early orphanage she resided with Mr. Spangler, and also with Mr. Luy. The house of the latter was "a preacher's home : " here Bishop Asbury made his home, as also did Bishop Roberts, at that time the circuit preacher. With these and others she was familiarly acquainted in her girlhood.

In 1812 they removed to Lexington, Ky., where they resided till her death. She made a profession of religion at the age of thirteen, and

uniting with the Methodist Church in 1803, her life was a practical illustration of the inspiring nature of its doctrines and usages.

There are resistless (or natural) and moral forces in the universe which shape our destiny. Among these our parentage, our nativity, and our education abidingly impress our character and our course of life. They do not, indeed, *necessitate* salvation, nor positively interfere with our choice of life and death; but they ordinarily predispose to the ways of virtue, or prejudice us against those of piety. We may naturally inherit superiority of attributes, but association and cultivation develop them in accordance with a noble or ignoble standard of taste. The mariner, in perpetual conflict with nature, is proverbially liberal; and the fire and sweetness of the poet and orator are but the lightning and the bloom that sparkled or budded in the versatile thoughts of childhood amid inspiring scenery. It is natural for the orphan child to think intensely of heaven. It only knew parental tenderness as the stormy day often knows the rosy hues and the brilliant sunlight of the morning. It remembers its early days as earth does Eden; it dwells upon them as on the dissipated oasis of some celestial dream, and thinks of living ones hard by the throne of love that gave it life, and whose departure was but a loving invitation to follow.

The early days of Miss Low, after she was capable of intelligent apprehension of truth, were spent amid the wilds of Lycoming, and the animated grandeur and beauty along the Susquehanna. Here her rambles were prolonged and numerous. Threading streamlets to their fountains; scaling mountain-sides and clambering over rocks; from dizzy heights surveying landscapes swimming in sublimity; traversing the country with friends, or at school among sequestered shades, she developed a passion for the works of nature so strong as to imbue her character with an abiding poetry. Her relish for the beautiful was manifest in the grounds around her residence, adorned with trees and shrubbery planted by her hands, and nourished by her untiring care. She recognized God in the trees and flowers, and she loved them for suggesting his nearness and his love. After about forty years' absence from the haunts of her childhood she revisited them with all her first affection, and from their mountains gazed upon them all again, and casting a wistful eye to scenes beyond the flood, bade them a fond farewell.

The loss of her father she was too young to feel; but that of her mother seems to have been the most poignant of afflictions. Death is always terrible. To the dying it may, through Christ, be gain; but to the survivors it is often crushing. When

children linger around the dying-pillow of a mother, and pour their tears like rain and cannot be comforted, then we feel that death is indeed an enemy.

The above view of death was fully entertained by Miss Low. Forty years after her mother's death its poignancy was still fresh in her memory, and in comforting a bereaved friend she writes the following: "O what millions mourn o'er blighted hopes and departed joys! It must be that an all-wise God, who is too good and kind to do wrong, permits these things, to show us that this is not our rest. Alas! we need line upon line and precept upon precept, ere we learn to appreciate such an important truth. Happy for those who early seek to build above the stars. Happy they who, called away in Christ, escape earth's sorrows and snares. I know, through early experience, that the dead survive, and '*the survivor dies.*' O that I could drop a word that would impart some comfort to your wounded and bleeding heart! If sympathy can assuage, you have it from me."

And so, when Miss Low was called, in her helpless years, with life all dark before her, to watch, tearfully, in her mother's room, to lay her face upon her bosom and sob her heart away, to receive the last caress and the last words of counsel, her sense of utter loneliness and friendlessness carried

the last words of kindness home to her heart with a power that brought her responsive promise to early fruition. "Sarah, my child, be good; read your Bible; pray to God; seek religion; meet your mother in heaven. There is no friend like a mother, my child, but God; make him your friend, and all will be well."

How important to set a pious example before children! How deep the memory of a mother's lessons of love sinks into the soul of the child long, long after the lips that uttered them are sealed in the silence of the dust!

The tones of her voice, like the music of joys,  
Have a mystical thrill that will make the heart feel,  
Whenever they fall on the ear.  
Like the silvery chime of some dear olden time,  
The words of her prayer linger sweet on the air,  
In the musical distance afar.

In about two years after her mother's death Miss Low professed religion, under the ministry of Rev. Robert Roberts, (afterwards Bishop,) and joined the Church in Carlisle circuit, Baltimore Conference. At that time the number of Methodists in America was only about one hundred and twenty thousand, and they were esteemed as an inferior grade of people—a fiery, fanatical class of deceivers. Did Christians live up to the gospel requirements, their indomitable ardor would lead the world to brand them with lunacy; and it is



not wonderful that the Methodists, believing that men are in danger of hell and destruction, and preaching and laboring as if they practically believed their creed, should be accounted as demented by practical or religious atheism. The odium in which they were held was a powerful preventive of their success among some classes of people ; and it has been considered remarkable by many that such a lady as Miss Low became, should have enrolled herself among their numbers ; or that, having united with them, she should not have withdrawn after a few years of practical experience of their follies. The reasons why she became a Methodist, and remained one, are easily stated.

The leading desire of her heart was to get to heaven. This desire, let it be repeated, was the leading motive of her life. It was not an idle wish, or faint hope, or fanatical belief—an expectation of an end without the use of the means ; but it was an object to which all things else were subservient—it was the supreme thought controlling her existence. She was inflexible in her purpose—no temptation could prompt her to fickleness. The capital city of God's habitation was the haven she proposed to attain ; and no sea, however smooth, no shores, however pleasant, could divert her settled resolve to see the King in his beauty, and behold the land that is afar. Nature may do much



in conferring decision of character, and may have done much for her; but grace must perfect what is commendable in nature, and be the crown of our rejoicing. In casting around for companions earnestly inspired with a purpose like her own, she found the Methodists greatly intent on a crown of glory. Their conversation was of heaven; their social meetings were absorbed with the one idea of triumph over death through Christ the Lord; their preaching was fervid, pathetic, and hortative; their music was the spirited melody of the heart; they invited others to Christ, and led the way; they proclaimed mercy free, in opposition to a limited atonement; they used the scriptural appellatives of brother and sister with the warmth of Christian affection: persecuted and detested, the world yet said, "Behold how these love one another!" Instant in prayer, in journeyings for the cross, and "in labors more abundant," "they obtained the good report of pilgrims and strangers on the earth, looking for a city which hath foundations, and whose builder and maker is God." With a Church thus earnest, humble, and imbued with the Spirit of Christ, this earnest girl felt that she had suitable company to the kingdom of the meek and the lowly. She deemed the reproach of Christ, with such a people, a greater honor than all the respectability of Egypt—"for she had respect to

the recompense of reward." Some unite with churches that are fashionable; some from regard to municipal regulations; some because of a loose discipline or easy laws; some on account of sacraments, or predestination, or mode of baptism; and others at the instance of proselyting busybodies in other men's matters; but Mrs. Norton joined the Methodists as the best means of getting to glory; as the surest method of obtaining "an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

With our Church polity she was thoroughly conversant, and Bishop Asbury was one of the counsellors of her youth. In her sixteenth year, we find a catalogue of all the preachers in her possession, presented to her by Bishop Asbury. The organization of our Church is in theory and form purely military. It is intended for both conquest and possession until the warfare is ended and the Captain of our salvation comes, as a king, to dispense with armies and establish the Church as a settled kingdom. The analogy of our Church to the army of our country is remarkably striking. The army is divided into large sections, termed *divisions*; these are again divided into *brigades*; brigades are subdivided into *regiments*, *battalions*, or *squadrons*; and these into *companies*; and these into *platoons*. Over the whole army, navy, and

militia, the president is commander-in-chief. Over each *division* of the army is a major-general; over each *brigade* a brigadier-general; over each *regiment* a colonel; over each *company*, a captain; over each *platoon* a corporal or sergeant. Our Church is divided in like manner: the districts over which the bishops preside answering to the divisions of the major-generals; the presiding elders' office and district answering to those of the brigade and brigadier; the preacher in charge and his circuit or station answering to the regiment, battalion, or squadron, and their officers; the class and band-leaders, to captains, sergeants, and corporals. This arrangement gives the Church advantages which no other system of spiritual warfare can possess. It is enabled promptly to send forth men to pioneer every outlying region, and at once to fill all vacancies occasioned by desertion, infirmity, sickness, or death. It demands the prime of health and manhood, the flower of life and talent, zeal and learning. It calls for the youthful from all ranks, and by its toils and trials develops their latent powers, and strengthens them to become men of might and sons of thunder. It lays aside in part the infirm and aged, and taxes the preacher's devotion to Christianity to the utmost. It is the most penetrating, self-sacrificing, self-denying, energetic economy the world has seen since the days of St. Paul. A bless-

ing to the people, its burden falls mainly on the ministry. Simple and light in its operations, it moves with celerity; and celerity in war is equivalent to success. Compact and united, when it strikes the foe, it does so with the force of its combined momentum, and resists attack with its entire front to the assailant. Like the angel of Revelation, it flies resistlessly; and, like him, preaches the gospel to every creature. The system is totally unselfish. It does not localize talent for the benefit and pleasure of the fastidious and selfish few, but dispenses its light and heat among the poor as among the rich. It panders not to exquisite delicacy or morbid taste, but inspires attendance upon the sanctuary as a place for *Divine worship*, rather than for the pleasure of hearing a musical or classical entertainment. Independent, bold, young, active, and poor, it has been blessed of God to the salvation of millions. Mrs. Norton was an admirer of the Church because of its *military economy*. She wisely concluded that such Church-government was the best and the most divine which resulted in carrying the gospel to the greatest number of people, and in winning most to Christ. And judging a tree by its fruits, the Church of her choice was peculiarly of the right-hand planting of the Lord. To preserve the system, she felt that *personal preferences* must often be

sacrificed to the general good ; and that as for *oppression*, this could not prevail so long as the pastor's official prerogative was countervailed by his means of subsistence in the hands of the laity. Piety in the Church is the great safeguard of its rights ; were this wanting, the Church would be an engine of evil ; and when this wanes, it will be well if the military Church decay.

As to Methodist doctrines, Miss Low cordially embraced them—she believed them plainly taught in the word of God. As for “baptism and the laying on of hands,” she was not much troubled. Baptized into Christ by the *pouring of the Spirit*, she was satisfied with being, in the same way, baptized into his Church by the *pouring of water*. She believed that God promised to “*pour* out his Spirit upon his servants and handmaidens” in the Christian age ; and that this was the *baptism* of the Holy Spirit on the day of pentecost, she was assured by the words of Christ and of an apostle. Christ, “being assembled together with them, commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized you with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted,

and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath *poured out* this which ye now see and hear." Her conclusion was, that if Christ himself baptized by POURING, and in no other specified mode, it was legitimate for his people to baptize and be baptized by *pouring* also; and surely it seems absurd that Christ would ignore a mode of baptism as spurious which he himself practiced at the hour of the full inauguration of the gospel economy. Surely, as the disciples were to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, from the day of pentecost through all time, their *exemplified mode of baptism* was rather an *absolute* and *authoritative* example to the Church than a merely *legitimate* form of consecration: was not the Divine pattern of baptism of Divine obligation?

▪ To our sister the Lord's Supper was ever a source of delightful meditation and participation. At the sacramental meeting her heart was always tender, penitent, and often rapturously moved with gratitude and hope. Looking to the past, Jerusalem as it was rose to her mind as in real life; and glancing at the future, Jerusalem as it yet shall be appeared to her faith a glorious reality. Rev. Dr. Huston says, "Mrs. Norton never interrupted my preaching but on one occasion. I was preaching from the text, 'Walk about Jerusalem,' etc., and Mrs. Norton seemed altogether overcome by emo-

tion. She praised God aloud repeatedly during the discourse. The next day she sent for me to talk with her about the city of God, and I never was in her company afterwards that she did not make Jerusalem a theme of delightful conversation." The cross on which the Saviour died, contrasted with the throne of God, and the crown of thorns with the diadem of eternal dominion, the insulting crowds, the mocking soldiers, the contemptuous robe of purple, the ring of the hammers, the writhe of agony, the weeping of timid and distant friends, the dripping blood, and the cry of despair; the awful hours of darkness, the rending of the rocks and hills, the bursting of tombs, and the death of the Lamb of God; the solemn burial, the sleepless vigil of the guards, the descent of angels, the rise of Jesus from the realms of death and hell, bearing their keys in victory, and the ascent from Olivet amid the shouts of heaven, seemed vividly near her as facts involving her redemption; while her joyful hope as vividly antedated the descent of the King in his beauty, and the clouds of attending angels; the clangor of the last trumpet, and the shouts of eternity; the flaming heavens, and the smoking earth; the bursting sepulchres, and the rising dead; the shouts of Christians, and the shrieks of the impenitent; the denunciation of the wicked, and the welcome



of the faithful. As she partook the elements of bread and wine, she expected ere long to drink the fruit of the vine new in her Father's kingdom, and to take the bread of eternal life, broken by her own Redeemer's hands, at his table, and among the good and the glorified from earth.

The time-honored day of fasting before each quarterly meeting was to her a season of self-examination as truly as of prayer and abstinence.

The philosophy of fasting, and its effect upon our faith and practice, is simple and wonderfully efficacious. Intense devotion to any object, and especially to religion, is greatly augmented by intense and concentrated thought. Whatever tends to fix our minds fully upon God, upon his law, and upon Christ and reformation of life, must result in strong convictions and resolves; and these naturally develop themselves in the active practice of duty. Religious abstinence from food tends, by the constant recurrence of hunger-pains, to fasten our thoughts upon the sacred reasons of our fasting. The weakness of the flesh suggests our utter dependence upon God, and impresses us with humble notions of our own powers, and increases in us earnest approaches to the Source of all our supplies of grace. The faith which rises to the highest power of triumph is inseparable from the humility and intense prayer *naturally* associated with the



Christian duty of self-denial in the temporary disuse of food. One secret of our sister's warm devotion seems observable in her attention to this simple but often exceedingly onerous duty. Any Christian would be greatly profited by fasting at least four times a year. The world can scarcely overcome our faith if we observe truly the vows we make to fast and pray.

Mrs. Norton always filled her place at the Lord's Supper. As it was an inexorable Jewish duty to eat of unleavened bread and of the paschal lamb in memory of the passover and deliverance from Egypt, so she felt it to be her Christian duty to partake the memorials of the death of the Lamb of God and of her deliverance from the destroying angel by his blood. No silly whim, no foolish caprice, no frivolous excuse satisfied her mind that God would excuse a public neglect of solemnly acknowledging her Saviour, and of showing a precious memory of his sufferings until his return: she partook of the elements as at the last supper on earth, and as hasting to the supper of the Lamb in heaven.

At the class Mrs. Norton was always ready to speak forth her testimony of the grace bestowed upon her in hours of sorrow or joy. It was a meeting she highly prized and understood. Few persons uneducated by Methodism have a proper

conception of its designs. It is simply a meeting for Christian conversation, and is devoted to such conversation exclusively. In its original institution, attendance upon it was not a test of Church-membership; indeed, it seems to have been expressly organized as a meeting for *inquirers* of the way to life—it was a seeker's meeting rather than one of full professing Christians. In America and in England, after Mr. Wesley's death, its original character was, wisely or unwisely, infringed, and attendance upon it became a test of Church-membership, and this either fortunately or unfortunately for the Methodist economy generally. As it now stands, it is a meeting for both seekers and advanced Christians by disciplinary obligation. That it is an abundant and incomparable means of grace to those who can attend upon it when properly conducted, there can be no doubt; but when ill-conducted, like all noble means of usefulness, it must lose much of its saving influences. The average weekly attendance upon it in sparsely settled regions in England and America, has rarely ever exceeded one-tenth of the actual membership. Yet to those who constantly frequent it, it is ever like the place on Jacob's journey where angels hovered o'er his dreams, and heaven's fair gates were opened wide to bless the fugitive of sorrow. The heart borne down with griefs finds

sweet relief when it can pour its story of despondency into the ear of Christian sympathy; and the feeble and the tempted gain new strength by hearing a like experience from those that are still urging their pathway to the skies. Where there is zeal in a good cause, that zeal takes fire and burns with double ardor when different persons, burdened with the same thoughts, express their feelings freely to each other. Whatever may be our secret fervor for God, we never can possess the same strength of union of hearts and hands without free and full expression of our thoughts, as we can with it.

“The motion of the hidden fire that trembles in the breast,” must escape the lips before it can warm the hearts of others; and it is our duty to quicken the souls of others, as well as to be strengthened ourselves. In class, we meet

——“Each the other’s cross to bear,  
While each his friendly aid affords,  
And feels his brother’s care.”

Christian sorrows and joys are common Christian property, and we may not deny sympathy with the former, nor can we rightfully be denied a share of the latter; but if we have no class-meeting, then the Church has no regular means of ministering in the one case, nor of being ministered to in the other. Mrs. Norton was ever awake to

these things, and always found the class-meeting a very gate of heaven; and it was here her true Christian character radiated in the frequent narration of her personal experience; and her place here was never vacant unless unavoidably so. When she spoke, she did so in an intelligible manner, so that all could hear and profit by her experience. This clear method of speaking is essential to a useful class-meeting. By it we are able to compare our experience with that of others, and gather many a crumb of comfort which would otherwise be lost. A mumbling, inarticulate expression of our thoughts in common conversation is not appropriate in any company, much less where we are talking of God and his goodness.

The weekly experience of Mrs. Norton exhibited a constant effort, on her part, of conformity of life to the law of love. Christian enjoyment was, with her, the result of a good life, as well as of that joy divinely bestowed by the "Spirit which helpeth our infirmities." They were rarely expressed vociferously, but were often poured forth as was the spontaneous glorification of God by Mary of old. Her "soul magnified the Lord," in intelligent enunciation for his mercy, till the listeners were overwhelmed by her spirit of utterance, and by the grace she ministered to them. A shout of glory is by no means reprehensible; for "*Cry out*

and *shout*, thou inhabitant of Zion," is an exhortation to which our conformity is rather commendable; but the protracted explanation of our joys certainly gives more of pleasure to a company of Christians awaiting the manifestations of Divine love "as the Spirit gives them utterance." The rapturous and angelic expression of Mrs. Norton, while she spoke of redeeming love, her flowing tears of pleasure, her burning words of happiness, have thrilled the hearts of many of her classmates journeying to the same destiny, and many of whom have long since united with her upon the fruition of joys to which those of the class-meeting were but the antepast.

Mrs. Norton had her temptations and her trials of faith. Many improperly suppose that persons possessed of fortune can have but little to mar their peace, or "tempt their steady feet aside;" but the case is far otherwise. Riches, by their fulness of plenty, tend to satisfy us with our lot, and make us forget those heavenly comforts which ordinarily draw mankind in thought strongly toward heaven. To be plain amidst the circles of voluptuous fashion, to be humble and unassuming among the tongues of flattery and compliment, is no ordinary task for humanity. And Mrs. Norton ever felt that a portion of one of our sweet hymns most graphically described her struggles of mind :

“Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,  
Prone to leave the God I love,”

was a constant sentiment with her amid the gaudy scenes around her. But yet her constant confession was,

“Here’s my heart, O take and seal it,  
Seal it for thy courts above.”

To her the allurements of heaven were stronger than the flatteries of the world, and communion with God more enchanting than the winning circles of refined but earthly society. Her habits of humility and piety, formed upon principle amidst the strongest counter-attractions, became inflexible, and she stood at length in her fixedness of purpose as a Christian, “firm as an iron pillar, strong and steadfast as a wall of brass.” Many professed Christians possess tastes so refined, that it seems irksome to them to associate with the humbler and less favored members of the fold of Christ. But the cultivation of mind and refinement of manners possessed by our friend will challenge comparison with those of any lady, either in our own country or in any other: her personal beauty, her superior intellect, her scholarly advantages, her ripe attainments, and her circle of friends, will place her far, very far above the large majority of those who put forward their claims to a place in “the first circles.” But with all her natural claims to eminence, she

would have esteemed it unworthy of a genuine lady, and much more of a Christian, to have pressed these as a reason for holding the children of God at a distance because they were not attired in costly apparel. To her the heart "refined" by grace, and fitted to adorn a throne among "the morning stars," was more to be esteemed than the intellect adorned with a few terrestrial ideas, and a body ornate with perishable apparel, too often badly selected, and adjusted in worse taste. With her the milliner and mantua-maker did not make the woman, nor hereditary claims to name and money; but those upon whom God's seal was set, and who spoke the language of the courts above; those who could claim descent from God, and were beautified with salvation, she recognized as proper objects of affiliation and association. It was not wealth or poverty, plain apparel or rich, high claims to merit or humility of pretensions, that had special charms for her—it was those who had their names written in heaven that she most admired and cherished. Without reference to any earthly badge of distinction, she met on equality with her fellow-Christians in the class-room, and profited by those having their "conversation in heaven," and, without being conscious of the fact, she was herself one of the means of preserving vitality in her class, and of leading others to glory. In the years of her



girlhood, with Bishop Asbury for a leader, she had oftentimes spoken, in class, of her hopes of one day outriding the temptations of life, and the stormy waves of death; religion and Jesus had been the subject of her strongest thoughts and expressions; she had witnessed the youthful and the aged drop their pilgrim staff at her side, and “fly from this desolate shore;” she had

“Longed from this desert with joy to rise,  
And away from her prison to fly;”

And at last the season drew near. For the last time she met in her class-room, seemingly conscious that she would return no more; she glanced over the past, and felt, overwhelmingly, that most of “her friends had crossed the flood,” and she had “to the margin come,” ere long to pass away. With a steady heart, yet full of emotion, she spoke of her decease, which must soon be accomplished: “long had she sought to win the prize, and glory was in view.” She said,

“Tis almost done, 'tis almost o'er,  
We're joining those who've gone before.”

“My old companions in distress  
I haste again to see,  
And eager long for my release,  
And full felicity.  
E'en now, by faith, I join my hands  
With those that went before,



And greet the blood-besprinkled bands  
On the eternal shore.  
My spirit too shall quickly join,  
Like theirs, with glory crowned,  
And shout to see my Captain's *sign*,  
To hear his trumpet sound."

"I have followed no cunningly devised fable. I know whom I have believed. I have fought the good fight, and have kept the faith. I shall overcome at last. I have the earnest of my inheritance. I have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come. There is a Divine power in the religion of our God: it sustained me when a child; it has attended me in all my riper years; and it is with me still. I had my doubts, my temptations, my trials, my days of despondence, and often feared 'I should be a castaway;' but grace has led me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home. Hereafter I may talk no more with you of heaven. I am going to see its glories with open face; to walk and talk with God; and expect to be in the company that will give you, one by one, an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord. Be faithful, and we shall meet again."

## CHAPTER II.

PRAYER—PRAYER-MEETINGS—PUBLIC WORSHIP—SINGING.

MRS. NORTON was eminently a woman of prayer. She “walked and talked with God;” her “conversation was in heaven.”

The effects of prayer are twofold: they make us like God, and secure the desires of our heart. We naturally assimilate the character of those with whom we associate, and become like them in spirit and manners: we often unconsciously and involuntarily adopt their idioms of speech, their intonations of voice, their idiosyncrasies of gesture and attitude, and their idiocratic impulses; we adopt their sentiments, and affiliate with the objects of their attachment: “A man is known by the company he keeps.” This peculiarity of our nature leads us to conform our hearts and habits, doctrines and duties, to the standard of Divine love, by being often in divine company. As the glass is made sensitive to the impress of the rays of light in the hands of skill, and as the image of the face before the object-lens passes to the glass within

the shaded camera, so the human heart, through penitence, is rendered sensitive to pencils of celestial rays; and humble prayer bringing the soul into secret vision of the face of God, with worldly light excluded, finds by experience that the glory of the Lord is softly imaged on it in immortal loveliness. And as the face of Moses shone from contact with the vivid glory of Jehovah, so mortals, merged by prayer into the glorious symbol of his presence, are covered with its radiance, and from communion with the Deity become, like him, arrayed with the beauty of holiness. By prayer, finite weakness is brought contrastingly into the presence of Omnipotence; corruption before spotless purity; sin before eternal vengeance; penitence before mercy; supplication before the Lamb of God; despair into the presence of hope; and death before immortality.

Here confession—the enumeration of our faults; the cry for grace to conquer ourselves, and to overcome the temptations of the world and of lust; the sight of God's perfect standard of duty, and the renewal of our vows of conformity to its requirements; intercession for others, and the rising joys of pardon, all mingle and make the hours of prayer sadly sweet, but all essentially rapturous.

Mrs. Norton loved to be often closeted from the world, alone in company with her Redeemer,

and she never returned from his presence but with a heart overflowing with love. It was her rule to pray till she was happy under a sense of Divine acceptance. Like Jacob, she never left the Angel without a blessing, nor allowed him to depart without pronouncing the emphatic name of *Israel*. It was this unbroken communion with God that gave that settled cheerfulness of temper she so generally manifested, and added to the impressive expression of her personal beauty. Whatever may be asserted to the contrary, it is certainly true, that where the heart is beautiful with love and joy, it imparts an animation, a brilliancy and a force to material charms almost fascinating; but where this joy, love, and brilliancy are toned up to a Divine standard, they impart a glow to the features and manners which dazzles the beholder into ecstatic admiration. Many persons of unimpressive and irregular features are often, when animated by intelligent conversation or action, exceedingly beautiful; and it is not uncommon to observe, in seasons of religious awakening, that many a face seems wonderfully transformed from plainness to elegance by coincident religious animation of the spirit. Congregations, indeed, are often riveted to a fixed gaze, and awed to silence, at the angelic loveliness beaming expressively from the face and deportment of some converted sinner suddenly

translated from darkness to light under Divine power. The transition from cries of sorrow to words of impassioned gladness; from tears to brilliant eyes; from lines of sadness to features flashing with delight, are incapable of counterfeit either by a novice or an adept in hypocrisy; neither faith nor fancy can produce such beauty, nor can it be the result of any self-deception. The cause of such blissful expression is Divine; the radiance and the joy are alike supernal in origin and revelation. Now, wherever such cause exists *permanently* in the individual, it must give a constant habit of expression, and the lineaments of the features must correlate to it, and become in a manner stereotyped. Philosophy claims that intelligence is one of the principal sources of human beauty; but certainly our faces express our moral feelings as truly as our intellectual, and as the latter are of a higher order, their resulting beauty of expression must surpass the intellectual, and greatly enhance the material. Mrs. Norton's face, though always engaging, and though intelligence added much to its attractiveness, was yet a debtor for its depth of winning to her secret devotion, to her happiness in God, and to her hopes of glory.

It is unfortunate for some Christians that they allow their private devotions to be needlessly interrupted by trifling circumstances. Some persons

arise in the morning and enter upon their daily employments without thanks for repose or reverential calls for daily help from God; nay, some do not even breathe an ejaculation for help. Prayer is not necessarily a protracted duty, and such might at least pause long enough to say,

“Direct, control, suggest this day,  
All I design, or do, or say;  
May all my powers, with all their might,  
In thy sole glory, Lord, unite.”

Alas for the Christian that begins the trials of a single day without God’s help or company! Such a one never finds a smooth life.

But there are also Christians who retire to rest with the intention of praying after they lie down, and are often fast asleep before a becoming prayer has escaped their lips.

Mrs. Norton never permitted *any thing* to interrupt her regular devotions. Her piety, at first like that of all young Christians, though based on principle, was yet impulsive; but she disciplined her principles into the habit of prayer, until at length any departure from it was exceedingly painful. *Three* times a day, morning, noon, and night, she retired from observation to pray.\* Her

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\* The following is an extract from one of her last letters. It is to some young converts, and dated 1848:

“I am seated by a good warm fire, writing to my dear Sarah and

house was usually thronged with visitors, and the cares of her household were onerous; but nothing prevented her observance of her stated seasons of devotion. She always found opportunity to forecast and excuse herself from her friends, and retire unostentatiously to her closet. Here she read a portion of the Bible, and was often drawn out in prayer till her agonizing soul, interceding for the salvation of some cherished object or friend, seemed ready to faint; but in the end her faith prevailed—she left her closet satisfied that “if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us, and if we know that he hear us, we know that we have the petitions we desired of him, whatsoever we ask.”

When away from home where retiracy from observation was often impossible, she selected appro-

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her sisters, who have taken such a wise step as to set out in earnest in early youth to serve the God whom angels adore. . . . O, my dear Sarah, be *firm*, and you will be happy. Could I live my Christian life over again, O how I would strive to be more earnestly devoted to God and his service. I find by long experience I am never so happy as when I attend to my *regular* duties faithfully, such as daily reading the Bible, and secret prayer at least *three* times a day, and also public duties as far as is in my power. A due attention to these things, my dear girls, will enable you to perform *all* other duties with delight and success, and to be consistent Christians in your daily walks at *home* and abroad; thus you will prove a blessing to the Church and all around you. . . . Read the Life of James B. Taylor, which I gave your papa. O, take his example. Never be satisfied until your religion gives you *power* over sin; until it makes you happy, happy, happy, in the love of God.”



priate times, and, without *external forms* of humility, bowed her heart to God, holding communion with him, like Hannah before Eli at the tabernacle : “ her lips moved, but her voice was not heard.” She might forget her apparel and her baggage, her servants and her friends, but she never forgot to pray. Her prayers did not make her morose nor discourteous to strangers or acquaintances; but bestowing a calm spirit of self-possession, she was intimidated by no needless fears of dangers, nor was her composure disturbed by casualties or misfortunes : ever ready to alleviate the distresses of others, she was patient under her own. In all her journeyings, and they were many, God was a companion whom she realized as always near. Under the singular licentious impulse which seems to actuate most travellers when first from under the observation of friends, others might run wild in their hunt of pleasure; but Mrs. Norton always preserved a sterling integrity. They might fly to the opera, the theatre, the masquerade, or violate the Sabbath, yet she sought the house of prayer, and found everywhere that enjoyment which springs from a conscience void of offence under temptation. In all her walks, in all her ways, a prayerful spirit and the recognized presence of God shed upon her a halo of loveliness that constrained the world to acknowledge that she was a genuine heir of glory.



But Mrs. Norton realized most wonderfully that God is the answerer of prayer. Often indeed before she arose from her devotions did the message of comfort arrive. As Daniel was assured by the arrival of an angel that his petition was granted before he ended his sacrifice, so Mrs. Norton felt that God granted all she asked. The fact is known by the sweet experience of many a prayerful heart, that "God answers while we are *yet speaking*:" so strong is the impression oftentimes, that we cease to urge our cry: constrained to believe we are heard, we go in peace by faith, and afterward behold the realization of our wishes.

This was the frequent experience of our sister when praying for the conviction and conversion of those whom she had selected as special objects of intercession. On one occasion, while praying for an unconverted family, she suddenly paused with the joyful faith of assurance, and calling for her carriage, drove promptly to the household that had been the object of her prayers, and ere long saw its members happy in a Saviour's love. At other times, in the same manner she would cease her cry to God for some unregenerate person, and hasten to verify her impressions by conversation; nor was her faith often disappointed: she was permitted, in many cases, to witness, personally, the fulfilment of the promise, that "what things soever we desire

when we pray, if we believe we receive them, we shall have them." She knew that, whatever might be the philosophy of prayer, we must ask if we would receive. She studied to know as far as possible the Divine reasons for this duty; but where she was not informed she was not delayed in its practice, but might have been said to pray without ceasing. She was constantly giving utterance to ejaculatory petitions or praises to God, and always possessed a prayerful frame of mind. From her

"Prayer made the darkened cloud withdraw,  
Gave exercise to faith and love,  
Brought every blessing from above."

"She loved in solitude to shed  
The penitential tear;  
And all his promises to plead  
Where none but God could hear.  
She loved to think on mercies past,  
And future good implore;  
And all her cares and sorrows cast  
On him whom saints adore.  
And when life's toilsome day was o'er,  
Its last departing ray  
Shone on a saint in joyful prayer  
Hard by eternal day."

Mrs. Norton always attended her prayer-meetings with extraordinary punctuality. Many persons frame vain excuses for non-attendance upon this wonderful means of grace to the Church; and some slight it because of its apparent insignifi-

cance, or on account of its lack of interest to their minds. Mrs. Norton always felt it her duty to be in her place, and to do all in her power to render the occasion engaging and useful. Indeed, the very fact of a general indifference to the prayer-meeting on the part of many, led her the more zealously to uphold it. She felt it was not the preacher's meeting more than that of the membership, and that every member was under vow to sustain it, as well as all other ordinances of the house of God. About this matter she did not scruple to exhort, remind, and persuade others to punctual attendance. She knew that some had neglected so much and so habitually, that they scarce knew what the prayer-meeting bell was rung for, nor what the preacher meant when he, from Sabbath to Sabbath, exhorted all to come up to the house of prayer. It might rain or shine, blow, freeze, storm, or snow, but Mrs. Norton was always at prayer-meeting. On the coldest night of one of our late winters the preacher attended for prayer-meeting, hardly expecting to find any present; but, to his astonishment, there was one gentleman besides himself, and fourteen ladies; and these had mostly come with Mrs. Norton at their head. On another occasion a tempest was rising sufficient to appall any ordinary heroine from going to church, if not from going to a ball; but on arriving at the house of wor-

ship the preacher found Mrs. Norton in her place, engaged in singing the songs of Zion. On her way home the streets were flooded from curbstone to curbstone; but Mrs. Norton waded across the current as if it were a matter of course, and made no objections. Such cold and rain would deter ten thousands of our fashionable Methodists and Baptists, Presbyterians and sinners from going to church at all; but Mrs. Norton thought these but trifles when they interfered with the worship of her God. There was a time when our Western people could go four or five miles to church on Sunday, and they can now ride that distance any week-day to go a-shopping; but when such a thing as going that distance to church is talked of, it seems absurd to many very good people. Such persons would hardly wade through a torrent to go to prayer-meeting. Our cities have as devoted Christians as can be found in the country, and it would be well if many in town and country could endure a little more hardness for the cross of Christ.

God often answers our prayers at once; but ordinarily he delays till the accumulation of petitions and their reiteration from the prayer-meeting creates a set time to favor Zion and to answer prayer. "The time to favor Zion, yea, the set time, (is when) God's servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof." In other words, the

time to expect a blessing on the Church is when its members visit it, and when they kneel in its dust before God. In this work all are under obligation to engage, and the labor should not devolve on a few. Let our sisters imitate the example of Mrs. Norton, and the waste places of Zion will never languish or mourn.

Mrs. Norton was always a punctual attendant upon public worship. When at home she worshipped with her own people; and when abroad, if Methodists were not convenient, she made it a point of duty to worship with Christians of other name. The simplicity and naturalness of Methodist worship had a peculiar charm for her. No gorgeous architecture, nor painted windows, nor pealing organs, no pompous apparel of priests, nor pews with velvet lining, impressed her mind with any very high views of Divine majesty. Her father was a member of the Society of Friends, and she *inherited* a love of plainness and neatness in the worship of Heaven, but ignored all paraphernalia of mechanical devotion as subversive of that genuine worship which is "in spirit and in truth." She was, however, conscious that spiritual power is always accompanied with "a *form* of godliness," but knew that such form is always exceedingly simple, and of easy comprehension by the multitude. Plainness in the sense of *rudeness* she

did not recognize as of the gospel ; but in the sense of *simplicity* she cherished it earnestly and affectionately. She loved our itinerant system, and the nature of its ministrations. It gave her a fair opportunity of analyzing the talent and attainments of our ministry, and of extending, in a wide degree, her sympathetic friendship for our self-denying preachers. She was not incapable of criticizing, justly, the finest literary efforts of the pulpit ; but did not believe that an *essay* read to a congregation to secure highly *literary apparel* for gospel truth was at all that kind of preaching the apostles and their successors were charged to afford the world. She believed that a man might *teach* by written *essays read* to a congregation ; but was decidedly of opinion that Christ did not ordain readers but preachers of salvation. Exhortation as well as instruction, the language of passion as well as of lexicography, expression of earnest zeal for man's salvation, as well as a desire to gratify his taste for good grammar, were, as she thought, essential elements of preaching. She deemed divine truth, expressed in the language of the heart by a divinely authorized messenger, as far more agreeable to the generality of men than the same truth in laced sentences, dovetailed words, and metaphysical technology from the lips of a speaking automaton. She preferred the eye flashing its lightnings on the con-

gregation, though the words of accompanying thunder were, like St. Paul's, "rude in speech." To gaze at a speaker's crown rather than his face; to watch his stooping figure, rather than a manly form in earnest action; to notice the eyeballs move in a stereotyped style from the people to a scroll below them; to grow weary by monotonous intonation and gesture; to become restless at the sight of a giant struggling to break loose with great thoughts, and yet fascinated to one spot by a paper covered with hieroglyphs, made her nervous for the cause of sinners and of Christianity. She loved that preaching which was earnest, and knew that it required far more intellect to remember and enforce burning thoughts *orally* and *ad libitum*, than to write them in cold blood and read them with a frozen voice and crippled expression. Animation, zeal, and fire are always compromised by any close attempts at literary accuracy in public speaking, and there is no mortal power can prevent such a result. And while the public *speaker* will never be criticized by the same rules that are applied to an essayist or *reader*; and while thoughts of fire and words of flame, however inaccurate in rhetoric, will always wield more power than a polished *lecture*, the preacher as an agent to save sinners is under obligations to confine himself to *preaching* rather than *reading*. Mrs. Norton's preferences for the earnest



man, in spite of his occasional inelegancies of diction, is to be commended, and we trust that such a truly Methodist taste will never be perverted in our Church by aspirants after literary glory.

The Methodist ministry, like the college of the apostles, embraces every variety of talent, culture, and natural temperament. It has its sons of thunder, and pathetic preachers, like John, and its literary giants, like Paul; and Paul, Apollos, and Peter are all our ministry, by whom we have believed.

Mrs. Norton could listen with as much pleasure to a simple-hearted earnest preacher—acquainted with the Bible, though of unpolished manners—as to a theological Cicero, and often derived more solid edification from the simple sermon of a young licentiate than from the lofty oratory of the sons of science. She did not stay away from church because an humble brother from an adjacent circuit was to preach, or because a local preacher was to fill the pulpit: a Heddington had as much of warmth in his preaching for her heart as had a Durbin, and though not quite so novel, his preaching she thought as profitable to her soul. She went to church to worship God, no matter who led the service; she was there as not neglecting “the assembling of ourselves together,” and that, when God’s worshippers were esteemed as jewels, she



might be written in the book of remembrance; she was there as one ever prompt to sustain the fortunes of Christianity, and to testify her devotion to Christ.

It is too often the case that professed Christians visit the house of God simply to *hear* the word, while the larger duty of public worship forms little or no part of their purpose.

To engage in singing praises, or in meditation, prayer, and renewal of their vows, they seem exceedingly slow; and if a favorite preacher is not the leader of the exercises, their scowls of disapprobation and dissatisfied looks reveal a heart but little at ease. That it is *their* personal duty to add life to the devotions of the hour, they seem never to dream; they wish to be delighted by others, but without any reciprocity of favors; they complain of dulness, when they should censure themselves; and speak ill of the preacher and the Church, when charity should begin at home. It is not the business of the preacher and of a few faithful officials to perform *all* the worshipping: the individual members of the congregation are under equal obligations to perform the duty of worshipping God heartily.

There may be dull sermons, and lifeless songs, and heartless prayers, occasionally; but a lifeless and prayerless people are enough to paralyze the

ablest preaching, and the most fervid address to a throne of grace. It is not expected that every preacher or every sermon will be alike entertaining; but it is requisite that every Christian should so worship God in the sanctuary as to feel that his soul has been profited by being there. It is not the best sermon, in popular parlance, that is most profitable to the inquirer in the way to heaven, or to the Christian hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Many a preacher who can scarce command the attention of even the pious few, will often, by his plain and pointed remarks, bestow light and comfort that bless his hearers for years, while they may have listened in vain for such thoughts from the tongue of the more gifted declaimer. Mrs. Norton was well able to distinguish between a good sermon and a poor one, and such as were food to her soul she rightly thought were good sermons for others. For a gospel sermon she had her standard, and that was the necessities of her own heart; for a *literary* performance, under the name of a sermon, she had a literary standard, and when there was a soul absent from the latter, it was utterly distasteful to her. No one ever was a stronger advocate for intelligence in the ministry than she; but she discriminated closely between vast information and the "rightly dividing of the word of truth." A man thoroughly versed in the

English Scriptures, and with a ready utterance, good sense, and zeal for the salvation of sinners, will often accomplish more good to the Church than half a dozen others weighed down with stores of ancient or general learning without such zeal. And it is so very common for literary preachers to be incapable or ashamed of calling mourners, or of laboring in the altar, that they are often at a discount among a people who look for results proportionable to the capital invested. Mrs. Norton certainly prized the practically useful preacher beyond all others; and when such were in the pulpit of her church, she was never happier than in hearing them and in coöperating with their labors to do good.

As a singer, Mrs. Norton in early life was quite gifted and well disciplined. At the house of God she always sang as one that intended to be understood as worshipping the Lord. In her singing there was nothing either bold or shrinking. She sang to glorify her Maker, and to add to the dignity of the Church exercises, to edify others, and to enliven her own affections. She was conscious that active participation in this part of devotion was useful as well as delightful, and that it easily degenerates if either *below* or *above* the *tastes* of a promiscuous congregation. Our Discipline has provided for the appointment of regular leaders in church-singing; and where such persons are really

devotional, and enter not merely into the spirit of the *music*, but also into that of the sacred poetry the music is intended to enliven, no exercise can be more exhilarating or profitable to the heart; for prayer, counsel, praise, and exhortation are embodied in our hymns: our hymn-book is a full exposé of our creed and our theology. Choirs and congregations rarely harmonize in tastes and singing: one is too much in advance of the other for any general coincidence of theory or practice. Music, without congregational *devotion*, is certainly out of place in a church, and lifeless tunes exhausted of vitality by a stereotyped repetition in the mouth of a few wilful voluntaries are certainly as destructive of devotion as are choirs when in advance of the people. Did every one do as Mrs. Norton, there would be far less of trouble on these extremes. Believing it her duty to sing, she put herself to the small trouble of learning new tunes when they were introduced by the leaders, and in a few days was able to sing with them, and assist others to sing also. In short, as a woman of prayer and praise, Mrs. Norton may be ranked among the Hannahs and Annas of Israel; and as an attendant upon Church ordinances, she may be esteemed a worthy example to all Christian ladies of our refined age and delicate Christianity.

## CHAPTER III.

BENEFICENCE — SUPPORT OF THE MINISTRY — VISITING THE SICK —  
ATTENTION TO YOUNG PREACHERS.

CHRISTIAN beneficence has many ramifications. There are in the Church numerous channels through which Christian charities liberally flow. In the support of the gospel ministry Mrs. Norton seems to have entertained in substance the following philosophical theory. If, upon an island adjacent to one of larger population, the inhabitants were overwhelmed with some great and calamitous sickness, it would, by the laws of humanity, become the duty of the citizens of the larger isle to provide nurses, food, and medicine for the sick until they recovered. This duty would devolve on one citizen as fully as upon another: none could be excused from devoting an amount of *time* to this work proportioned to that of every other one. If, upon a fair estimate, it were found to require the time of every man for one day out of every *ten* to attend to this benevolence, none could be exonerated from such requisition without a proper equi-

valent or substitute. But for<sup>7</sup> each man to leave his work one day in every ten, besides being very inconvenient, would subject the sufferers to much inconvenience also, from want of skill in the inexperienced, and in loss of time by transportation, and would expose each successive novice to the dangers of acclimation and contagion. In such case, were each man to spend that *tenth* day at home, and in his own particular branch of business, and devote its proceeds to employing substitutes to fill the place of nurses, physicians, and stewards, the whole matter would be placed in a far more advantageous aspect. The nurses and physicians would, from day to day, acquire fresh skill in managing the pestilence, and the sooner bring its ravages to a close. As to the selection of the nurses and physicians, that should be left to the highest authorities and best judges among the people. A voluntary tax of *one* day's labor in *ten* on every man in the island, paying for the support of proper persons to care for the sick, would be the substance of the proposed plan of relief.

Now the world is sick unto death: the pestilence of sin is daily sending thousands to the grave unvisited by the resurrection, and the Church of Mercy is bound to see to its recovery. To effect this instrumentally, one day's service in ten seems requisite from every Christian. God, however,

has substituted a plan by which the Christian may remain at home, while aids, of God's own choosing, are to go to the dying, and Christians remaining at home are required to sustain the preachers in their labor of love.

The duty of their maintenance devolves alike upon all: one is as much under obligation as another to give one-tenth of his means for their sustentation; none can be exonerated. The final credit of the world's salvation will devolve upon each Christian, according to the voluntary gift of his time, or its equivalent, as truly as upon the preacher: the glory of the world's redemption will be common Christian property.

Entertaining these views, Mrs. Norton was always equal to her required *pro rata*. Indeed, as she knew that many never gave according to the Divine standard of duty, she sought by more enlarged liberality to supply the lack of service on their part. Her means were large, and she extended her gifts to the outside limits of her liberal standard. Her husband, too, though not a member of her Church, generally and promptly seconded her efforts, and gave himself, unostentatiously, as unto a glorious cause. It would be indelicate to record the sums she gave; and as she was ever modest and quiet in her charities, we pass them by; they are written in the book of Omniscience,



and will appear in that day when Christian works will be reviewed as *evidences* of Christian faith and character.

In searching out and in visiting the sick, Mrs. Norton has a glorious testimony. In this matter Christ was her pattern. Were there any sick or in distress in any lane or on any moor, she was the first to find it out, and she was sure to find it out. Her carriage was often at their doors, and it never appeared there empty of comforts; she was sure to carry supplies with her. "When the ear heard her, then it blessed her; and when the eye saw her, it gave witness to her, because she delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him: the blessing of those that were ready to perish came upon her; and she caused the widow's heart to sing for joy."

One example will suffice to illustrate her regular interest for the afflicted. On a cold night, when the frozen snow crackled beneath the feet of the few that were hardy enough to be without, Mrs. Norton made her way to her prayer-meeting, and was the only lady there. Early next morning, before her pastor had breakfasted, he was waited upon by a maid-servant of Mrs. Norton.

"Mr. H.," said the servant, "Mistress wants to see you right away; she says, come before breakfast; she has something for you to do."



Without delay he visited her house, and found her in a state of deep solicitude.

Said she, "Brother H, I have not slept a moment all night for thinking of the sufferings of the poor people of our city. I am afraid old Sister L. is in want. Mr. Norton is absent, and all the grown servants are away, and I had no one to send and make inquiry. I had half a mind to go myself; but I am suffering with rheumatism, so that I was afraid to venture out. I want you to go down to Sister L., and observe what she requires for her comfort, and procure every thing at my expense. If she needs wood, or food, or clothing, or money, or bedding, or medicine, or a doctor, see that all are provided, and let the bills be presented to me."

Brother H. departed with alacrity, and reaching the house on a gloomy alley, found every thing perfectly quiet. After knocking at the door awhile, he was answered by a feeble voice to push hard at the door, and make his way in. On entering he found not a spark of fire, nor a stick of wood, nor a crumb of bread.

"O," said Sister L., "Brother H., is it possible that any cares for a poor old helpless creature like me? I have been sick for two days, and have been scarcely able to move. Last night my last morsel of food and my last stick of wood gave

out, and I laid down here sick, and holding communion with God. Brother H., God never quite forsakes us. He always sends help just when we need it most."

"But, Sister L., I must tell you that Sister Norton sent me here."

"Yes, brother, the Lord's angels, that watch over me, touch the tenderest hearts, and they touch others, and I am fed. They make somebody think of us poor ones of the flock, and tell them to look after us. Sometimes the word is heard and attended to; sometimes it passes by without any effect. I can never be grateful enough to you and Sister Norton for your goodness; but it is all from God, who hears the needy when they cry."

"But I must leave you now, Sister L., and see to it that you are made comfortable." Leaving the house, he first bought a large load of wood, and employed a man to saw it up and split it, and pack it safely away. He then went to the store and procured the finest and most excellent blankets and spreads and other articles of furnishing needed, and having ordered a physician, he returned to Mrs. Norton and reported the state of the case. As soon as breakfast was over she ordered all sorts of provisions, and, accompanied by a servant to carry them, was soon at the bedside of sorrow. Raiment, food, and nursing were duly provided

under her care, and the distresses of that aged and infirm Christian were ever afterwards mitigated by the hands of her kind friends.

In this case, as in all others of a kindred type, Mrs. Norton was actuated by the love of God, and by her accountability at the judgment-seat of Christ. She knew that "whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion towards him, the love of God had no place in him." She understood that "If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful for the body, it profiteth nothing." The sentence of the last day was ever familiar to her mind, and she felt that then there would be no questions asked as to her theory of religion, or orthodoxy of creed; but that a genuine saving faith would be referred to only in connection with its valid fruits. Then, "I was naked and ye clothed me; hungry, and ye fed me; sick, and ye visited me; a stranger, and ye took me in," will be the only admitted evidences of a true belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. In view of these things, she labored as well as prayed; she ministered to the bodies as well as to the soul, and all for the love of God.

Is it not to be feared that very many professed Christians will come short in the final reckoning, in view of their illiberality to the suffering poor of the flock of Christ? It will not do then to say we have enjoyed religion and been happy in the love of God. Joy and peace undoubtedly attend the love of God in every heart; but where this love is true, it is always attended by the fruits of true benevolence. They who have joys without the practical fruits of grace, are those

“Mistaken souls, who dream of heaven,  
And make an empty boast  
Of inward joys and sins forgiven,  
While they are slaves to lust.”

It may be some charity to visit any that are sick, if it be done prudently and usefully; but are not too many disposed to visit such of the sick as need but little attention from strangers, while they neglect the bedside of the lonely poor and really broken-hearted. O, how it revives the spirits of such to feel they are cared for by others, and especially to know that the love of Christ inspires the visitation! On such occasions many words are not needed; our simple silent presence, manifesting sorrow for those that mourn, is often far more emphatic with consolation than volumes of garrulity.

On the part of Mrs. Norton it needed no combination of benevolent persons to stimulate her to

duty; she led the way in the path of charity, as every Christian should do, and that without delaying for the cumbersome and slow operations of a "society of special charity." Combinations are exceedingly useful and praiseworthy, but by no means indispensable in affording comfort to the needy: every Christian has individual as well as collective duties, and no organization can merge individual responsibility into aggregate obligation. Each member of the Church of Christ is a special vigilance committee of charity, and the Divine President of all will hold each disciple strictly accountable for the discharge of the duties of his office. While the ministry of the Church is laboring in every land for the regeneration of the nations, it would not be amiss if Christians everywhere were to turn their attention to doing good in their own immediate vicinity. A religion that does not reform the moral practices of its people is good for nothing; nay, it is really a curse to man rather than a blessing. And any system of religious belief that professes to bestow high spiritual joy, and at the same time is not eminently practical in regenerating the practices of society, should be discarded as false and fanatical. "By their fruits ye shall know them;" and according to this standard, only that kind of Christianity can be esteemed genuine which practically does good to the *bodies*

as well as the *spirits* of men; and whatever religion, under the *Christian* name, diminishes Christian fraternity, must be esteemed infernal in spirit and origin.

Whatever may be said of the rectitude of Mrs. Norton's creed as a Methodist, one thing is certain—the overwhelming proof of her piety, of her genuine regeneration, was a consistent and persistent Christian life. Of her the language of inspiration is appropriate, “Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.”

Among the classes of persons to whom the attention of Mrs. Norton was sympathizingly drawn, was that of our young preachers.

A young man may be called of God to preach the gospel, and may have a burning zeal for the cause of the Church; yet he has a fiery ordeal through which to pass before he can stand freely and boldly before the people with the heavenly message. Time, practice, and experience are requisite to amply qualify him for his work. The Spirit of God may quicken the mind to a sense of duty, and to a proper understanding of the Bible; it may guide into a thorough understanding of all revealed truth; but it gives no new truth, nor adds any knowledge to the sum of duty already bestowed. God has given his full message to the world in human language, and a knowledge of that

message is to be attained as is the knowledge of any other book in human speech—that is, by diligent study. If we expect God to fill our open mouths when we speak, we must avail ourselves of our eyes and ears in filling our memory with holy lessons; then the Spirit may help our utterance—not otherwise. The whole economy of the gospel is opposed to idleness; and an idle preacher, who reads the Bible but little, and spends no time in searching to understand it, will pray in vain for help in time of trouble. But where industry has been used, where the preacher has lived in the use of the means preparatory to proclaiming salvation, then he may call for God's help, and it will always come at the right emergency. The GIFT of speaking is attained by practice; the *grace* of preaching by faith and prayer: both are as necessary to success as is knowledge.

In the first years of a young preacher's ministry, he is naturally strained to the utmost in forming *habits* of thought, of investigation, of composition, and of speaking. If he will learn to speak *orally*, and not *read sermons*, he must submit to the *mortification* of many a failure, and to the pity of many a supercilious Solomon. If there be any thing calculated to crush out the vanity of a young preacher, it is the efforts of his apprentice-years in the itinerancy. If ever he needs sympathy,



consolation, and encouragement, it is then; but unfortunately he then meets with less than at any other period of his life. How often does some mortified old crone take the young preacher aside, and advise his retiracy from the field as incapable of rising above his imperfections! In such hours of despondency, those "hours of darkness" to the youthful advocate of truth, Mrs. Norton's house was always a welcome asylum, and her cheering conversation as a spring of refreshing waters in the midst of the sultry desert of trouble. Some young preachers we wot of, almost wishing themselves dead through discouragement, have escaped from their work for a season to obtain a little comfort at her hospitable fireside, and from her words of hopeful exhortation. Before Bascom began his ministry she was in the Church, and after he began to preach was always among his most constant friends, and one too that he ever prized as a friend in hours of trouble. Dr. Tomlinson, while a youth at the university, was her *protégé*, and had a gratuitous home at her house; and the room he occupied is still visited by preachers in memory of the benevolence of its former owner. Her house was in truth a "*preacher's home*," and especially for the younger members of the fraternity.

Aside from their regular support, her preachers frequently shared her liberality, and many a dis-



tant brother has had cause to bless her thoughtful benevolence in seasons of want. In fine, she was known by her deeds in every department of charity, not as an ostentatious giver, but as one whose "light so shone that others, seeing her good works, gave God the glory." In addition to Mrs. Norton's private devotion to the cause of benevolence, we find her associated with others in works of charity. For many years before her death she was president of the "Ladies Sewing Society," and also of the "Benevolent Society of Lexington." Like Tabitha of old, she was the practical friend of the poor, and many a garment might be shown wrought by her own hands for the comfort of the needy. Writing of the Benevolent Association, she says, "Its leading design has been, and now is, to elevate the character and *condition* of the indigent classes, and especially of indigent females; to lessen the *tendencies* to an evil course of life, and to inspire a love of honest industry, and that of self-respect and an *independent* spirit, without which all attempts to ameliorate the condition of the poor will prove abortive."

In the work of benevolence Mr. Norton always unobtrusively aided his wife. He did not believe that almsgiving was always a charity; but that the giving of employment to others, and the cultivation of independence of spirit in the poor, was the true

course for philanthropy. We find, however, among her correspondents many thanks through her to him for his generous donations and perpetual assistance. One incident will illustrate his characteristic charity. Dr. Huston was once entering the church to deliver an address on behalf of the "Provident Association," in Lexington. A gentleman stopped him and said, "Do try and squeeze *twelve and a half cents* out of Johnny Norton." When the subscription was taken up at the close of the exercises, among other things found was a deed conveying a house and lot to the society from Mr. John Norton. Neither Mr. Norton nor his wife seems ever to have had *public* credit for any thing like the real amount of their charities. God knows them all.

## LETTER FROM DR. TOMLINSON.

LEXINGTON, OCTOBER 4, 1824.

MR. AND MRS. NORTON :

Suffer me to call you my benefactor and benefactress, and do me the favor to accept through this channel the offering of my unfeigned gratitude for your unaffected kindness towards myself, in granting me a place in your family for the last eighteen months, and, above all, for a share in your solicitude and regard.

I have, however, to reproach myself for not having exerted my powers more diligently to de-

serve such distinguished attention. It nevertheless affords me a pleasure to reflect that the value of your generosity (to which I now most gratefully refer) will not be estimated in the view of the great Benefactor by the unworthiness of the subject towards whom it has been exercised, but by the purity of the intention by which I am assured it has been prompted.

I cannot better take this my affectionate leave of you than by cordially commending you to the continued guardianship of Him whose disinterested goodness you have so strikingly exemplified in the instance which is now and ever will be remembered with sentiments of the most unqualified friendship and respect, by

Your very much obliged and obedient servant,  
JOSEPH SMITH TOMLINSON.

The solicitude of these generous people, to which Mr. Tomlinson above refers, is often alluded to in subsequent letters. In 1837, he says, among other things, "I am amazed to find myself sprinkled with gray hairs and surrounded with almost a numerous family. I have lived out more than half my days. . . . I shall always regret that I did not take your advice to be more moderate, and indulge more in the pleasures and relaxations of social intercourse. I now believe it would have been

justly to my advantage in a mental and spiritual, not less than in a physical point of view. My constitution was seriously and perhaps irreparably injured by my sedentary habits and intense study while at the University.

“I was elected to a professorship in Randolph Macon College, and Dickinson, with a salary of one thousand dollars and a house. I had made up my mind to go to Dickinson College, but our trustees (Augusta College) and my colleagues in the faculty remonstrated most strenuously against it,” etc.

## CHAPTER IV.

LIBERALITY OF SENTIMENT—CAMP-MEETINGS—BAPTISM—DIVERSIONS.

A CHRISTIAN is known by his catholic spirit; a bigot by his exclusiveness. The heart of the one is enlarged like the universe; to the other the radius of a mustard-seed is vast as eternity. The former, pure as the snow, like it absorbing the rays of the sun, is lifted by them to range ethereal realms, to glitter in the rainbow, to descend in pearly dew, and to combine with every life-sustaining work of nature, and weave a halo of glory around all created beauty. The latter, like the iris of a vampire, expands so much by the light of day, that the pupil dwindles to a microscopic line, while each infinitesimal ray that falls upon the retina is full of irritating pain.

Bigotry is the offspring not always so much of limited knowledge as of limited intellect. Sometimes it springs from pride of opinion, from self-importance, and from an unbalanced development of conscientiousness and local associations. A mind with a tortoise eye, or of microscopic nerve, is often

incapable of telescopic range of sight, or of embracing large views. As a mind capable of generalization is always liberal in sentiment, so one denied such conformation is naturally illiberal: a bigot from this cause is less to be blamed than pitied. The person who is affiliated to a particular party, who hears the sentiments of his own partisans exclusively, is prone to think all others immersed in folly, and that wisdom will die with his own people. This prejudice begets antipathies to all others but of its own tastes; matters of taste and opinion become gradually articles of faith, and all others not of its synagogue are given over, in its estimation, to strong delusion to believe a lie. It requires a strong mind and the most enlarged charity in Christians of different names, to avert the growth of bigotry in the heart.

Mrs. Norton had studied this tendency thoroughly, and had set herself strongly against it. She learned to discriminate clearly and fully between articles of *faith* and matters of *opinion*; between sentiments of taste and those of religion. In articles of faith she was well informed, and as inflexible as adamant: in matters of opinion she was intelligent and decided, but courteous and charitable to those of dissimilar views. As a Christian, she affiliated with all those who practically believed in "repentance towards God, and faith in

our Lord Jesus Christ." They might differ with her about reprobation, election, and the final perseverance of the saints, on apostolic succession, baptism, and other ordinances, but while they showed a sincere desire to please God and overcome the world, she esteemed them as fellow-heirs of the grace of God, and cordially greeted them as true Christians. In writing to some young Christians, Mrs. Norton says :

"I have neither time nor room to give you my experience on holiness of heart, but refer you for it to the 17th and 18th verses of the forty-eighth chapter of Isaiah. These I have read, and even now read, with tears of deep penitential sorrow. Hearken, my dear young friends, O hearken to the commands of God ; then, indeed, as I know for myself, your 'peace will flow as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea.' I am truly thankful you have been led into the Methodist Church. While I *know*, and *rejoice to know*, there are good Christians among *all* evangelical denominations of Christians, I must prize the *privileges* of the Methodist Church before any and all. Its doctrines of faith are attended with no mystery, and are *preached plainly* ; all can understand them. Above all, the *soul-reviving* doctrine of *Christian holiness* is constantly inculcated in our Church. We

can, as we believe, attain even here to the blessedness of the *pure in heart*."

Here we clearly observe strong denominational *preference*, but not the least bigotry. As a Methodist she was decided and earnest, and strove zealously to advance the interests of her Church. This conduct was Christian and praiseworthy. The Church of Christ is a grand army of various separate divisions. To effect the greatest good to the whole, each soldier must necessarily do the utmost for his particular division, brigade, regiment, or company. Were each, under a mistaken notion of good to the whole, to labor for the special credit of other companies than his own, his duty to his particular band would be permitted to suffer, and in that way the good of the whole would be jeopardized, and anarchy rather than order would rule the hour. To effect the greatest good for any compound work, the laborer must attend specially to the perfection of his part; this must engage his zeal, his skill, and his ambition. An army of men in building a city wall, is always so divided to the task before it, that each subsection has a definite work to do, and each soldier a definite part of this subsection to labor upon; and by this division of toil the whole is more rapidly and skilfully completed.

To accomplish the most in a Sabbath-school,



each teacher must attend to the interests of his special class, and labor to bring it to the highest state of prosperity. In a city of many stations, each pastor is obligated to attend to the advancement of his own charge, and so also is each member. The same principle holds true of each Conference of our entire organization, and of each division of the Methodist Church in the North and in the South, in Canada, Great Britain, and Australia, and, indeed, of all denominations of Christians. Each member of the Church of our Lord does the most for its general good, by laboring steadfastly for the special prosperity of that branch of the Church with which he is most directly connected. Mrs. Norton, therefore, by laboring most to build up her own denomination, did more for the cause of Christ generally, than she could have done had she pursued a different course. In persuading worldly people to become Methodists, she persuaded them to become Christians, and thus secured their salvation and attachment to the Church general, by leading them to unite with one of its *accredited branches*. In doing this she infringed the rights of none, nor was she chargeable with any uncharitable exclusiveness. Proselyting to her denominational dogmas she regarded both as ungenerous and unchristian. Such conduct she was well aware could spring only from a desire to

glory in local numbers, rather than in the cross of Christ, and she held it in utter disdain, as both dishonest and dishonorable. If persons from other denominations chose voluntarily to embrace her views, and unite with her people, she received them with cordiality, but never with glorying or exultation. To win a soul from the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity was cause to her of the greatest gratification; but to purloin a lamb from the fold of another Christian people she did not deem a matter of special rejoicing. She sympathized in the prosperity of other evangelical Churches, and their decline was to her no secret cause of envious pleasure—in their decadence she felt that Christianity was losing ground. Attempts to proselyte her she silenced by dignified reserve, and a courteous but thorough contempt: her firmness of attachment to Methodism was impregnable to assault. The following conversations with Baptist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and other ladies, will shed light on her views of the usages as well as the doctrines of her denomination.

CONVERSATION AT ——— SPRINGS—CAMP-MEETINGS.

MRS. PRINCE. I think, Mrs. Norton, I once saw you at a camp-meeting as I passed through Logan.

MRS. NORTON. Possibly you did, Mrs. Prince. I often visit my husband's relatives in that county,

and, with some of my old friends, go to Clifty or Ash-Spring, to spend a few days in religious enjoyment.

MRS. P. Well, really, Mrs. Norton, I am sorry to say it to you, but I was never able to see what enjoyment there could be at a camp-meeting. There is so much confusion, so much noise, so much apparent if not real disorder, that it seemed like any other place than one appropriate to religious meditation.

MRS. N. But you know, Mrs. Prince, we are creatures of habit, and have very diverse tastes, even in religious matters. You Presbyterians are always for quiet and meditation. We Methodists believe in self-examination and calmness as much as you do; but we think there is a time for all things. A camp-meeting with us is a battle-field; it is a place and an occasion for action, and not for so much of meditation. As for the noise and confusion, these, as far as they occur, are incidental to all great assemblies. The thousands who followed Christ, you recollect, must have appeared quite disorderly, according to your conceptions. We read that they marched with him in promiscuous crowds, and are described as *running* together on various occasions, amid the greatest excitement and wild enthusiasm, to witness his miracles, and to wonder at the shoutings, and leapings,

and praises of the converted and restored. I think, Mrs. Prince, there must have been some dust and noise, and no little irregularity, in those assemblies. Do you think you would have enjoyed a place in the crowds around the Saviour, Mrs. Prince?

"Yes, Mrs. Norton, I think I should, though I prefer a calmer state of things."

"Ah, Mrs. P., I know you would, after all, have been as much excited as any in the Lord's company. The truth is, every one delights in excitement, and especially if it be pleasurable. I love a camp-meeting because of its animation. I dislike a dull life exceedingly. During the camp-meeting exercises there are always hours of the profoundest quiet and solemnity, of meditation and pathos, of sadness and joy. It is a meeting that gradually absorbs all other thoughts, and the eternal world finally engrosses the profoundest attention. Many that never hear the gospel elsewhere, attend upon it here; and it is one of those happy means embraced by our people of bringing the gospel into the highways and hedges, and compelling men to hear the invitations of Mercy."

"But, Mrs. Norton, your camp-meeting converts are, many of them, like the morning cloud and early dew, and much of your zealous labors are unfortunate."

"That may be true, Mrs. Prince; but is that a

reason for cessation of labor for the lost? Of those brought to your Church *directly from the world*, as are most of our converts, you will find as great a proportion who have been unfortunate as with us. I happen to have had a peep at several of your church books, and I was no little astonished to find there so large a number of *backsliders* from the way of life. You, who are always twitting us on the instability of some of our new converts, would find ample food for reflection at home, were your poll-books revised as often as ours are. But the existence of backsliders is to be lamented and not exulted over, or appealed to as a witness of misdirected zeal. The net of the gospel, you recollect, was cast into the sea, and gathered good and bad of every kind; and when drawn to shore, the good were put in vessels, and the worthless cast away. According to your theory, Mrs. Prince, the gospel net should have been used only to drag out fishes known to be perfectly good. We are satisfied to follow the sense of the Saviour's parable, and to cast the net into all waters, and then undergo the humble process of assorting good and evil. We always get some good fish, Mrs. Prince, though some appear in the net without gills or scales; but those who are afraid to cast the net for fear of entrapping monsters, are often dependent for supplies upon us poor Methodist fishers of Galilee. I

will tell you, Mrs. Prince, how I came to love camp-meetings. I visited one with prejudice. At night I lay down to take a little rest, but found it impossible, from the excitements of the occasion, to go to sleep. The moon was at the full, and sailed at meridian height above the forest. Its broad rays, streaming downward through the trees, covered the ground with enchanting figures of light and shade. The preaching had ceased; the succeeding prayer-meeting was ended, and the congregation had retired to their tents: the midnight hour had come, and was serene even to fascination. The air was unusually balmy, and not a breath disturbed the peaceful scene. I leaned my head out of the window of the tent to admire the wonderful tranquillity. Around me was a tented army of pilgrims to eternity; beyond were dimly seen the summits of lofty hills, fathoming the depths of the blue ocean above, and leaning against the moon. The encampment below seemed connected with the Mount Zion above by a tangible and material highway. The communication between Jacob's camp at Bethel and the gates of heaven above by the ladder and the angels, was scarcely more poetic and gorgeous than seemed the scene around me, so draped was it in light, and so holy in its single object. While rapt in a revery of admiration, I fell into a slumber, and dreamed of harp

and song, of victory and diadems. I saw the tented host pass the gorges and the cliffs of the eternal hills, march by the moon with songs, and enter a halo of glory so bright that my eyes could not follow them. I could hear their song sinking deeper and fainter into the realms of immortal triumph, but their forms I saw no more. Roused, gradually, from my dream, I heard a song among the hills "by distance made more sweet." Anon it sunk and rose, and was full enough of power to impress me as the voice of a glorious multitude. Now its echoes floated away among the chasms of the wilds, like beautiful clouds borne from the parent mass by the fleet winds. Now it melted, softer and softer, till it mingled with the silent light above it. Now it broke across the valley like the strong peal of a trumpet, and then sunk again into the faintest murmurs of melody. I was moved, absorbed, charmed, and bewildered; then I slept and dreamed again. Suddenly the shock of a glorious tide of flying song startled me to my feet. Below me the encampment was all alive with an army of happy Christians moving among the aisles and checkered shades with hasting feet. Their song was as that of the angels to the shepherds, and the star of Bethlehem seemed to lead their van. A thrill of rapture came over me; prejudice vanished like smoke; I shouted glory, without



waiting for an invitation. I heard them sing, 'Come along, come along, and let us go home;' and, poor orphan as I was, I ran from the tent with my company to join their numbers, and follow after my father and my mother to the skies. I tell you, Mrs. Prince, a camp-meeting is a glorious place to me; I love it; and though you may have no taste for it, yet I think it is because you never saw one under favorable circumstances. I am for camp-meetings, Mrs. Prince. I am certainly not ashamed of that part of Methodism, I assure you; I glory in it."

"Well, Mrs. Norton, so you manage them prudently, I hope they will do good."

"We ought, Mrs. Prince, to have as much credit for common sense as any other people; and if we fail in prudence, it is not unlikely that others might also. But, Mrs. Prince, camp-meetings began with your people, and their perpetuation is not so much a matter of faith as of expediency. Allow another camp scene, and I will change the conversation. At a meeting where the encampment was in a valley, there was, among other ladies, one of unusual attractiveness. Her person was elegant, and her face of singular beauty. Joined to accomplished manners was the spirit of fervid piety. She was sedate, modest, and lovely. As a singer, her voice possessed remarkable sweetness and power;



it was strong without being masculine, and shrill without harshness. One beautiful evening, after service, the ladies, in promiscuous groups, separating themselves from the listless crowds about the tents, ascended a hill on the east, and met in prayer in the heavy woods beyond. After the lapse of an hour or so, their united voices were heard, making the woody arches ring with joy. It was obvious that the company was in motion towards the encampment, and the people began, instinctively and simultaneously, to move in the direction of the approaching throng. They looked toward the hill-top, and observed that the rays of the sun were covering the trees with a perfect mantle of light. The reflection, indeed, was so strong that the air itself was seemingly thickened with a flood of splendor, and it was painful to look in that direction. Towards this cloud of glory the marching crowd was advancing with shout and song. Presently the van emerged, and the baptism of light upon their heads and forms seemed like the illustrious gleam of glory that faith beholds descend upon the armies of Israel as they enter the gates of heaven when their warfare is ended. The lady of whom I have spoken was leading the company. She was dressed in white, and one in like apparel was on either side. Her graceful form was erect on tiptoe; her head was thrown back, her glossy

hair was streaming in the wind; her face shone like an angel's, and the song she sung was full of electric emotion. The first intelligible words heard in the distance were,

‘ Who is like Jesus? he is Salem’s bright King; ’  
He smiles and he loves me, and calls me to sing :  
I’ll praise him ! I’ll praise him with notes loud and shrill,  
While rivers of pleasure my spirit shall fill.’

The solemnity of the occasion, the wildness of the scenery, the splendid harmony of nature with the Christian emotions already awakened, together with the theme of the hymn, so forcibly reminded every one of the glory and music with which the Christian shall march to the summit of Mount Zion, that every eye was bathed in tears, and every soul within hearing was thrilled with the sublimest feelings that ever visit the hopes and hearts of mortals in the valley of tears. The children ran out to partake of the excitement, the servants forsook their employment, the tables were left half-spread, and the suppers unprepared; the whole encampment, like old Jerusalem, was moved at the cries of hosanna from the lips of young men and maidens, old men and children, as they hailed the shout of a king among the tents of Jacob. You may talk about animal excitement, Mrs. Prince, but this excitement was celestial; it moved the bodies of those that had souls, but the soul took

the lead. You may love a demure way of getting to the kingdom, but I love a *foretaste* of the joys above. I love such scenes; I love to enjoy the frames of mind they inspire, and the memories of grace they bestow. I love camp-meeting songs; they may often be rude in structure, but they are polished by their own inspiring nature; they are the hymns of the heart: by their very repetition they ‘burn their glorious thoughts into the soul.’ Camp-meetings, my friend, are full of poetry, of ardor, of rapture, and usefulness; and though I am a poor defender of any thing, yet I assure you my heart is always in favor of a good camp-meeting. I frequently travel a hundred miles to be at one in its true simplicity. Excuse me, Mrs. P., but I hope you may yet form a good opinion of them.”

## CONVERSATION ON BAPTISM.

On another occasion, in company with a Baptist sister, she was called upon to vindicate her Methodist preferences.

“I think, Mrs. Johns, that you spoke unkindly of our usages. You say that Methodists are a good people, but you pity their ignorance. Now I should like to be set right if I am in error.”

“I really meant no offence, Mrs. Norton; but I have been taught to believe that there is no such thing as baptism aside from immersion; and of

course I think you are in a grave error. I really cannot see how you believe that any other mode is baptism at all."

"Well, really, Mrs. Johns, I am certain of one thing on that matter, and that is, that Christ himself baptized by *pouring*, and there is no proof that *he* baptized in any other style."

"I never heard of that before, Mrs. Norton, and would like to be informed of the place where such a fact is stated."

"It is elaborately stated in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, madam."

"What does that say, Mrs. Norton?"

"It states that Christ *poured out* the Holy Ghost upon the disciples, and that Christ called this *pouring* of the Spirit the *baptism* of the Spirit."

"Ah, my dear friend, but that was not *water* baptism."

"True enough; but it was a *baptism*, and quite as important a one, particularly as it was performed by Christ himself. It shows the *mode* in which baptism was performed at the first hour of the inauguration of the dispensation of the Holy Ghost, and there is not another place in Scripture where the *mode* of baptism is ever described."

"Ah, but, Mrs. Norton, the word baptize means to immerse."

“How do you know that, Mrs. Johns?”

“Why, madam, that is what the Greek word means.”

“I am no Greek, Mrs. Johns, but I have heard that the Jews spoke only a kind of Greek, the meaning of which was essentially Hebraized; and, besides, there were various kinds or dialects of Greek, and each dialect gave a different shade of meaning to its words. At any rate, it seems to me that immerse does not necessarily mean to *submerge*, as you Baptists mistakenly suppose. But, Mrs. Johns, if immersion or submersion was the only meaning of the Greek word to baptize, and John by consequence submersed the people, how could Christ baptize by pouring, as the apostle and Christ assure us he did? The very fact that Christ did *baptize by pouring*, is proof to me that submersion was *not* the *only* sense of the Greek word for baptize. As for the difference between water and Spirit, Mrs. Johns, that does not affect the *mode*, about which you think we are so pitifully ignorant.”

“Well, Mrs. Norton, I am no hand to argue: if our preachers were here, they could explain all about it.”

“Well, madam, please put my question to them, and if they can answer it satisfactorily, then I will plead ignorance, and be very happy to see

them. Remember my question, Mrs. Johns. You say that *baptism by pouring* is no baptism at all; and the Scripture says Christ did baptize by pouring; now you or your preachers are to show me how it is that your assertion, that baptism always means submersion, is in harmony with the point-blank assertion of God's word to the contrary."

"I'll bring you some of our books, Mrs. Norton."

"Very well; if they answer my question, you will oblige me; but if they evade it, you must allow me to remain as I am now, that is, perfectly satisfied with my baptism."

#### CONVERSATION ON DIVERSIONS.

At another time, meeting with an Episcopal friend, the conversation took a religious turn.

"The doctrines of your Church agree with ours, Mrs. Norton; but you are so strict with your members that I am afraid I would make a poor Methodist," said Mrs. Parsons.

"We certainly would hold you to a reasonable account if you departed from our rules of pious living."

"You object to so many things that I think are no great sins, that I really believe you are too severe."

"What you call little sins, Mrs. Parsons, are 'the little foxes that spoil the vines.' I do not

place many of the foibles of human practice in the vilest category; but we are not to 'despise the day of small things.' If you will observe carefully, Mrs. Parsons, there is no dividing line between great sins and little ones; they are all of the same family, and are blood-relations of the same ancient paternity. You cannot be insensible to the forcible and instructive words of Montgomery, in describing the tendencies of our nature, and the ease with which we are led astray.

'This world is all a wildering maze,  
Where sin has tracked ten thousand ways  
Its victims to ensnare;  
All broad, all winding, and aslope,  
All tempting with perfidious hope,  
All ending in despair.'

If, Mrs. Parsons, we are in danger of falling into large sins by the indulgence of venial peccadilloes, as you call them, I think we should be always on our guard, and give the little foxes no quarter. We are rarely in danger of suddenly yielding to great temptations, unless our minds have become pliant by a gradual yielding to little indiscretions. Familiarity with little sins leads us to palliate them, to excuse them, to apologize for them, to plead for them, and finally to advocate them, and look pleasantly at larger ones."

"Really, Mrs. Norton, you state the case as it



is, according to my experience ; but, I think God is very charitable. I go to balls and theatres to accommodate my friends, or play a game of cards when necessary to complete the circle, and sometimes dance to make up a set ; and while my conscience once upbraided me for this, I have found myself at last defending these things. I know they are wrong ; at least their tendencies are not always good. Our Church is against them ; but we do not expel our members for engaging in them."

"I believe, Mrs. Parsons, that whatever is wrong in its general *tendency*, must be so in its very nature. I am not metaphysician enough—Dr. Holly is the metaphysician—I am not able to say exactly where the intrinsic evil of dancing, card-playing, and balls is located ; but the vast majority of dancers and card-players and seekers of pleasure in worldly amusements, are, I know, very far from being experimental Christians. I have no patience with an opera, or theatre, or with dances or cards. Connected with these things there are always some things innocent and elegant ; but Satan always covers himself with angelic apparel when he would lure young hearts from the guardian care of Mercy. A circus always has such vulgarity inwrought with its performances, that it is really disgusting to womanly modesty, and a theatre is generally but little better. As for cards, they have the basest



and most abandoned associations so immediately connected with them, that I am really shocked, if not horrified, to see them in the hands of youth. You know young Mr. J. was ruined very quickly after his acquaintance with Miss L., of M. The secret of that thing has now leaked out. Miss L. brought with her to H. a pack of French semi-transparent cards. She taught Mrs. N.'s daughters and their cousins to play, and when young gentlemen called, they all met in the parlor, and to give zest to the hour they set to with these cards. Mr. J. learned to play among these young ladies a year ago, and has, by that very means, been brought to his awful death."

"You have no objections to parties, Mrs. Norton."

"I have no religious objections, if they are not unchristian; but in my tastes I have no relish for them. I think the social principle of our nature should be sedulously cultivated, and am pleased when people meet and converse in a rational way, and especially when Christian people meet and become better acquainted with each other. But when they meet in large crowds for the mere purpose of social *amusement* rather than *entertainment*, I think such meetings are a real social injury: they rapidly degenerate; they develop neither intellect nor refine-

ment of morals. Refinement of manners may result from parties of pleasure ; but I fear they too often cultivate a refined sensualism of manners, rather than those of high-toned purity : where humanity is crowded it too often ferments, and virtue is often developed at the expense of innocence. I am partial to social gatherings of small dimensions. In these there are less numerous tastes to gratify, and they are likely to contain persons of select and congenial tastes.\*

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\* The following passages of correspondence illustrate Mrs. Norton's tastes for sociality :

“On New-Year's night we all wished for you. Mr. Taylor and Mr. Hockady were so kind as to present Mrs. Bradford and myself with a New-Year's gift of Baker's apples and candy. Well, we joined, and had some nice ice-cream, etc., and invited all down into the parlor after tea. We had a family party. We were very sorry you had gone, especially as H. told me he had fallen in love with you.”

S. N., 1848.

“Sister Norton: . . . I agree with you that company, unless there is congeniality of sentiment, is much better dispensed with. Solitude is, as you say, more instructive and profitable than an ignorant, self-conceited, or giddy companion. I, with you, love the *little domestic circle*, made up of friends of my own choosing: “the faithful few,” whose minds have been *enlarged* and *cultivated*; who, if they have not made much progress in *human* wisdom, have been *taught of God*; whose hearts have been enlarged by that charity which thinketh no evil, and that love which is without *dissimulation*. All the better if the mind has been cultivated, but good always. I tire and become disgusted with the frivolous chit-chat of the day, and long for one sensible person who can possibly discuss other topics than dress, parties, fashion, etc. Like you, ‘I am tired of visits, modes, and forms, and

“I am certain that neither beauty, wit, humor, fun and frolic in youth, can ever compensate for untidy rooms, a horrid kitchen, a disordered table, and an indolent household in the married state. The woman of firm piety, of neatness and frugality, is rarely nursed in the hotbeds of amusements and frivolity. A well-spread table, the children cleanly and in their places, the windows transparent, the floors polished, and the carpets and beds inviting and tidy, good nursing of the sick, and attention to domestic comforts and arrangements, and servants well-trained and attentive, are, through the great area of life, infinitely beyond, in merit, ‘the poetry of motion,’ the smile of beauty, and acquaintance with cards and novels, so charming to some aspiring young men. The good sense of our young ladies is badly spoiled by the dissipated style of fashionable life, and its demoralizing round of pleasures. I don’t think young people should be demure, but a perpetual giggle is not necessary to hilarity; they need not attempt the oracular, but they ought not to be silly; they should be ani-

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*flutteries* paid to fellow-worms’—such conversation cloy. . . Jane is my only companion. She is experienced in the deep things of God. She has had few advantages, but yet she is well calculated to advise, comfort, and encourage the young,” etc.

September 26th, 1826.

EMILY R——.

mated, but they need not prompt their vivacity with French brandy ; they ought to entertain each other, but mind should be addressed rather than passion ; let them regard each other as beings of mind rather than mere animals ; let it be understood that they are creatures of head and heart rather than of heels ; let the mental rather than the material person be the basis of social pleasure-parties, and then such entertainments will be refining and elevating. But while womankind are treated as if they had so little intellect that they are incapable of entertaining the other sex with three or four hours of conversation, they are degraded by the presumption. We have dancing-schools, and music-schools, and literary schools, and painting-schools, and it would be well if we had schools to teach our youth how to converse rationally, brilliantly, and delightfully. If they have not brains enough to be educated to converse, they are certainly to be pitied. Your mere material amusements, such as dancing, cards, etc., belong in the main to barbarous and ignorant tribes, and should remain among them ; it is a poor compliment to a Christian age and people if we have no capability of higher enjoyment than the savages of Guinea and Patagonia. I want a higher standard of pleasure for youth, Mrs. Parsons, than such as governed the semi-enlightened people of

other times. I would give to youth all pleasures that do not endanger their temporal excellence, or jeopardize their hopes of heaven. I think the Methodist Church does right about amusements. It sets a high and refined standard, and I hope never to see it degraded one single degree."

## CHAPTER V.

CONVICTION—REMARKABLE INSTANCE—INSTRUCTIONS TO A'MOURNER—  
FAITH—RELIGION.

“MRS. NORTON, you were speaking last week on conviction for sin. I have been at the church and heard Mr. Maffit. He describes the feelings of the heart with great accuracy, and I have often had compunctions of conscience, but never was in such a state of mind as he described to be the experience of some seekers of religion.”

“He said, Mr. Truman, that under conviction, there were as many different classes of emotions as there were classes of people. The case he described was, as he said, a remarkable one.”

“Did you ever see a case of the kind, Mrs. Norton?”

“There was a friend of mine whose experience was of exactly the same character. Indeed, I have her letter giving a full account of it.”

“I should like to hear it, Mrs. Norton, if it be not improper to give it.”

“Not at all, Mr. Truman. It is here in my

portfolio, and at your service. Shall I read it to you?"

"If you please."

"It is dated, Louisville, September 4th, 1828—about nine years ago. The writer's name you need not know:—"I have wished ardently to hear from you, my dear friend, and for the last few days I have wanted you with me more than any person in the world. I scarcely know how to describe my feelings; but if I could, and you were here, you would understand them. I have wanted your prayers and the prayers of all Christians. I have lived in rebellion against God; he has shown me his power, and I now pray for his mercy. Since the death of a dear child, I have, in the midst of grief, thought of my unprepared state to meet him in judgment; but I have not sufficient feeling to produce amendment. I should have gone on had not God smitten me in wrath; but now I hope, through grace, to lead a new life. I am under his sore displeasure, and know not that he will accept me. Mother and S. think I am *enthusiastic*, though I tell them they try to disbelieve I am under conviction. O how I wish to be with those that could understand me, and pray for me! My friends here are kind and amiable, but O! how little they know about religion. They tell me to ride or to visit; as if I could fly from the

wrath of God ! The devil tempts me to deny my condition ; but it is too plain a case. It would be sinful not to believe it is from my God—you shall judge if I ought not to think so.

“ On Monday evening, after tea, I went into the passage and took a seat. Elizabeth Oliver was there, and we conversed of matters, whether of interest or not, I do not now recollect ; I was in nowise agitated. I had neither heard nor read any thing to excite my feelings. The wind blew through the passage, and I thought how easy it would be for God to carry me away with it to eternity for my unbelief. Yet I was calm. I got up and walked, and thought, if the Lord would only assist me, and show me the way, I would try to serve him. In a *moment*, like *lightning*, a feeling came over me, such as cannot be described ; but O, how awful it was ! I thought I was struck with death—that soul and body were lost for ever. It was not *fainting*, for I was able to *walk up stairs*. I told mother I was dying, and was not prepared. From the agitation of my frame, and the palpitation of my heart, she thought I was very ill, and sent for Doctor Rogers. He thought it might be a *chill*, and that a *fever* would of *course* follow ; but it was *nothing of the kind*—I had *no* fever. I told them I only wanted the prayer of some Christian. I lay in this agony for some length of time, and then be-



came a little composed. Next morning Dr. Harrison prayed for me. I felt the want of Christians around me. O! how I wanted *you* or Mother Anderson with me. My mother does not understand these things, good as she is: even Elizabeth seemed nearer to me, and I preferred her being with me at night. James came, and was distressed at my situation. He tried to *reason* me *out* of it. I told him I did not *give way* to my feelings. Indeed, I should feel better if I could talk freely to some one: I try to pray, but my prayers are weak. Very often that *indescribable* feeling comes over me, and almost destroys me. I dread it so much that I constantly fear the next will kill me. I try to lift my thoughts to heaven, and plead with my Saviour; but I am afraid. O my dear friend, will you pray for me, and tell my dear mother I want her to do so also? O, if you could unite with me!

“ ‘ You will receive this to-morrow night or next day. Will you tell mother? I know she will readily unite her prayers with yours, and I will join at the same time. Let the time be at 3 o’clock on Saturday evening. O! think of my wretched state of mind. I would not make this request if I did not greatly need your prayers.

“ ‘ There is one scripture that now gives me some consolation. When I am in the greatest agony, I remember that Christ walked on the troubled wa-

ter to his disciples. They thought it was a spirit, but he said, "It is I: be not afraid." Then I think he would not call me if he did not wish me to come: would he call me to him to destroy me? O no!

"I have ceased to grieve for my dear child. Its death will prove a blessing. O, how my feelings are changed! If I can obtain peace with God, I shall be happy, and not dare to repine. . . I have mourned, but it is all over now. O that the Lord may render it a blessing! I had your letter by me several hours before I was able to read it, not knowing who it was from. I felt unable to open it. James opened it and told me it was from you. I then knew I would find some consolation.

" 'MARY A——.' "

"That seems a remarkable case, Mrs. Norton."

"Remarkable, but by no means uncommon."

"Well, I think I can explain it, madam. That lady lost her child, and it naturally made her serious; it led her to reflect on the future. In this sensitive state the rushing of the wind, by association, awoke a serious train of thought that became overpowering to her already lacerated feelings."

"Those things are certainly to be taken into the account, but they scarcely explain those successive paroxysms of awful dread of God and his wrath, of her constant frame of horror, and of the sud-

denness of her transition from a perfectly calm state of mind to that 'indescribable' agony under conviction for sin. God's Spirit often makes use of natural means, and of his word, to reprove the world of sin, and there is nothing that happens to us but, if we open our hearts to reflection, it will reprove us of disobedience to God in one way or another. But there is one thing I would have you remember; that is, that when the heart feels acceptance with God, it almost invariably passes from the indescribable agony and horror of conviction, to unutterable rapture in a single moment. As this lady says, her conviction was sudden as a *flash of lightning*; so also is the joy to such hearts when they find pardon by faith. The doctor did not understand her case; it was not a nervous or febrile malady, though her whole frame sympathized with her conscience; all was attributed to enthusiasm, as if there could be such sudden effects without an adequate and sudden cause. Worldly people are ignorant of the phenomena of spiritual operations, or they feign to be. My own experience coincides very much with that of this friend. I was a child when I heard the word preached; but that word, attended by the Spirit, wrought such a conviction of unpreparedness for heaven, and of sinful tendency, that I was often overwhelmed with horror; nor did I ever find re-

lief but in prayer to God for mercy. All persons under conviction for sin do not feel and act alike; but all are distressed; and there is not a living soul, that has arrived at years of accountability, but, at some time, has felt something of those awful forebodings of the future, and of guilt before God, which the Bible tells us are from the Holy Spirit—so I believe. They come, and depart if not improved; and finally leave us *altogether*; and then our case is hopeless; for no man comes unto me, says Christ, unless the Father draw him. Then we are given over to be lost.”

“Mrs. Norton, I wish you would tell me how to get religion, if there is such a thing.”

“By religion you mean, as I understand, pardon and regeneration.”

“Yes.”

“With pleasure, Sir. Understand me then. A regenerated person is a Christian, and a pardoned man is a Christian. Regeneration is by the Spirit; pardon is through faith. The Spirit regenerates—this is God’s work; in this transformation you have no direct agency. Pardon is also the act of God, but it is obtained on *conditions* which you *can* perform and *must* perform. You must exercise faith in the atonement, and then you will be forgiven.”

“Pardon me, madam, for interrupting you; but

I never could understand what you mean by faith."

"You must have been either badly instructed, or have paid little attention to good instructions. Faith is a belief in our responsibility to God at the last great day, and that we will be saved if we forsake *every sin*, and ask God's pardon for the past through the atonement. A saving faith is such a belief in these things as leads us to repent. Repentance is such a regret for all our violations of God's law as leads us to forsake them. When the last sin is given up, then faith instantly takes hold of a Divine promise, and the sinner is instantly pardoned; and this pardon is accompanied by regeneration."

"What is the proof of our pardon, Mrs. Norton?"

"The *direct* proof of *pardon* is the *promise of God*. On this point I would have you thoroughly enlightened. The *direct* proof that we are pardoned is the word of God—remember that. For example: a seeker of religion, forsaking every sin against God, and asking pardon for all, is instantly forgiven; for 'he that asketh receiveth,' and 'him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' When we perform the *required conditions of pardon*, we *know* we are pardoned, because God says so *in his word*; it is not by the witness of the Spirit, but by the *Divine assertion*, that *we know we are forgiven*. I

repent of every sin—I say *every* sin—and then pray God to forgive me all for Christ’s sake—THEN I AM FORGIVEN—I then KNOW I am forgiven, for God affirms it. ‘He that asketh receiveth.’ I ask pardon, on repentance, and receive it, because ‘he that asketh receiveth.’ I want no higher testimony than this.

‘Firm as God’s throne his promise stands,  
And he can well secure  
What I’ve committed to his hands  
Till the *decisive* hour.’ ”

“But, Mrs. Norton, I have asked, and I am not satisfied that I have received pardon.”

“The reason, sir, is obvious. You have not forsaken *every* sin; for had you, unbelief would not keep you from resting satisfied of pardon on the truth of God’s word. Such is the nature of repentance, faith, and pardon, that you cannot exercise this faith while the smallest allowance or apology for any sin finds a place in your heart. You are fond of worldly pleasure; you will not give it up, and until you do, you cannot exercise this faith. When you uncompromisingly give up every sin, great and small, then you will be forgiven, but never till then. ‘If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer.’ You cannot believe that you receive pardon for *all* your sins, while there are *some* left which you will

not abandon; the thing is impossible: forsake *all*, and at that instant *all* will be forgiven. God never forgives a part only."

"But if we are saved by faith in a special promise, what is the use of prayer and of calling mourners forward, publicly, for prayer?"

"Prayer gives exercise to repentance and faith; it is inseparable from them, so that it is written, 'Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' A convicted sinner is not always willing to give up every sin, though he is ready to part with many. 'God works in him to will and to do of his own good pleasure;' and in prayer he is a 'co-worker with God, working out his own salvation with *fear* and *trembling* before God.' By prayer to God he becomes willing to give up one sin after another, till he parts with the *last one*, and then he rests satisfied in the promise that 'he that asketh receiveth.' In the act of prayer he finds peace, because it increases faith by enlarging repentance till 'repentance is unto life.' 'Repentance unto life' is the abandonment of *every sin*, no matter whether tears or groans or external signs of grief attend it or not; it is the cessation of sin, because sin is regretted as evil in the sight of God, that constitutes repentance unto life. We may reform our life without any reference to Divine accountability; but this is not repentance towards



God : reformation, and regret for sin as evil in God's sight, make the sum of *Christian* penitence ; it is principle and practice combined. God's house is a house of prayer ; the altar is the usual place of prayer in God's house, the known place of sacrifice and atonement. Men have sinned publicly, and must publicly acknowledge it, if they would be successful in prayer—'with the *mouth* confession is made unto salvation.' The man who is *unwilling* to acknowledge himself a sinner by a public act of humility, will never be forgiven ; you may rest assured of that."

"If we are saved by faith in the act of prayer, Mrs. Norton, why do so many distress themselves about the witness of the Spirit ? When I get religion, I want to know it for myself."

"That is praiseworthy, Mr. Truman ; but many, in seeking the witness of the Spirit, neglect the necessary antecedents of repentance towards God, and faith in his promise. When you are pardoned, you will be regenerated, and the witness in your heart will show your adoption into God's family. 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, and the love of God will be shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost'—we will have a sense of 'righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' Perform *your* work of repentance and faith, and God will attend to *his*, that of regeneration and

of the witness of the Spirit: *let his work alone*—attend to *yours*, and all will be right. Many persons, under the *fear* and *trembling* of conviction, are in a frame of mind too agitated to admit of comprehending the plan of personal salvation as I have explained it; but they can fully comprehend and feel that prayer will bring them to God. When a convicted sinner can understand *no other* instruction, he can understand *this*; and as prayer gives exercise to penitence, faith and love, ‘brings every blessing from above,’ I then urge him to pray, and pray with him: if he perseveres, he is sure to believe and rejoice at last—‘God is the rewarder of those that diligently seek him.’ If you think your soul worth saving, you have feeling enough to strive for pardon; and if you will pray earnestly and constantly, you will *experimentally* learn the way to God through repentance and faith. The most benighted come to God in prayer, and are made happy by faith in the very same path as the most enlightened. Prayer is the way to God: faith begins, attends, and finishes repentance, conquers the world, and triumphs over death.”

“What is conversion, Mrs. Norton?”

“As a general term, it signifies change—change of any kind. In religion it ordinarily means a change of life; but with us it is often used as synonymous with regeneration. In this sense it

means a reörganizatiön of our moral nature; a change not only in our principles of *religious* action, but in the spiritual nature itself. The spiritual *life* which Adam lost when he sinned, and which was not inherited by his children, is, in regeneration, at once renewed. All are, by nature, spiritually dead; but the Spirit entering the soul, unites with it as a vital principle, and we possess newness of life; our bodies become temples of the Holy Ghost, and the Father and the Son come and dwell within us; we are thus united to God, and ‘are made partakers of the Divine nature.’ This regeneration is called by us experimental religion, as distinct from practical religion, because God proposes to us, if we will do certain things, we shall feel his abiding presence; we try the experiment, and thus ‘set to our seal that God is true.’ When we are converted by the Spirit, our hearts are love, as God is love: we love all people, even our enemies, and would bear them all to heaven. The witness of the Spirit comes to the heart, and assures us we are God’s children. Yet it is not always at once understood by those to whom it comes. ‘God speaks once, yea, twice; but man perceiveth it not:’ hence we are exhorted to examine and prove ourselves whether we be in the faith. ‘Know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is *in you* except ye be reprobates?’ A

good test of genuine regeneration is this : obedience being the test of true love to God, if we would not deliberately violate a law of God, then our love to him is supreme ; then are we true Christians ; then will we be always striving to do all our known duty. Regeneration implies *supreme love* to God, though that love may often be practically irregular ; perfect love differs from this in being *practically* uniform. Regeneration is popularly called by various names, and if I ask a man if he has *religion*, and he says he does not know that he has it by that name, and I ask again, do you love God supremely, and he answers, yes, then I am satisfied he has what I call experimental religion. Did Christian people better understand each other's terms for indicating the abiding sense of the love of God in their hearts, there would be far more harmony and fraternization among them. I may find a golden coin, as a doubloon, and not know its name, the superscription being in an unknown tongue. I may be asked if I have found a doubloon, and answer I do not know ; but if one is described, I can, by examination, promptly ascertain. I know at once that I have found a piece of gold of considerable value, but I know not its *technical* name and value until I know the meaning attached to its name. So it is with experimental religion. I may obtain it, and not know it under

that particular appellation ; but I know I love God and his people, and have passed from death unto life. It is said, very foolishly as I think, by some persons, that ‘a man cannot have religion and not know it.’ In one sense this is true ; but I know people may be Christians, and yet be sometimes in *doubt* of it ; and they may have experimental religion, and not know it by that *particular name*—the *substance* is one thing, and the *name* quite another : we know the *substance* always—not the *name* always.”

“But, Mrs. Norton, is noise essential to religion?”

“Not always ; but I know this—that it is inseparable from it if there be any zeal in the Church : when there is lightning, there is sure to be thunder somewhere ; and where there is thunder, there is sure to be an efficient cause for it. Mr. Norton and myself once disagreed on this point, but we have been long since reconciled.”\*

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\* In 1818 Mrs. Norton visited her old home in Pennsylvania. While there she writes to Mr. Norton as follows : “I entirely agree with you that, to enjoy religion, our principles must be pure, and our actions just, both at home and abroad. *So far* I agree with you. My dear, I know you most seriously believe the Scriptures. I shall take your advice concerning the Methodists, as I believe it most kindly meant. Fear not ; I shall take no decided step in that way until we meet. It is not to any sect I have been awakened, but to God ; though gratitude compels me to acknowledge the Methodists as the means a *second time* of my being uncommonly stirred up to my religious duty. In all

their meetings, public and private, day and night, I can solemnly say, I have never yet seen any thing inconsistent with holiness. I am sorry you are prejudiced against class-meetings. To the soul in real earnest, they are useful. Church-meetings at night cannot be avoided. Every society, English and German, has them. I go with your mother often, as well as to Methodist meetings. My dear, I never could and never did believe *noise* or *empty sound* was religion; but I believe when the heart is filled with the love of God, the tongue and the voice will sometimes praise him aloud. My greatest delight at present is alone in my closet with my God. 'Tis to him I look for strength to persevere until I become what I would be."

Mr. Norton, in writing to us on January 20, 1858, says, "I have some connections Baptists, and many Presbyterians: I am more attached to the Methodist Church and doctrine." From this statement it appears he had very long since ceased to object to his wife's being in that Church. Prior to 1818, she had been most useful in winning many to Christ, and at that time was not at all what is called a *backslider*.

## CHAPTER VI.

CONVERSATION WITH A NEW-LIGHT—METHODIST USAGES.

“Good evening, Mrs. Norton.”

“Walk into the parlor, Mrs. Newel.”

“I have come to have a little friendly talk with you, Mrs. Norton. Have you heard our new preacher?”

“I have been to hear him once or twice.”

“Don’t you think he is a charming speaker, Mrs. Norton? We are all delighted with him. We think you Methodists ought to be pleased with him, he is so much like you in his views. He is for uniting all Christians on the Bible. You know he preaches on the witness of the Spirit, and makes the matter so plain, I really sometimes wish everybody could hear him. You know I like you Methodists and all your ways, except your mode of baptism, and your unwillingness to unite on the Bible.”

“Indeed, Mrs. Newel, I was pleased with the liberal spirit of your preacher; but, really, on the matter of Christian union, I am not so certain he takes any really practical ground.”



“You don’t understand him, Mrs. Norton. He wants all Christians to unite.”

“Well, what do you understand him to mean by union? Do you mean to say there ought to be one great denomination known by one name?”

“Certainly I do.”

“Then you wish Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Episcopalians, and all, to give up their views and accept those of your preacher, which would be admitting that you have more sense than all other people—an admission very complimentary to you—and you claim this compliment as perfectly just. Now, really, Mrs. Newel, you admit that these denominations are Christians; and if so, they are such by uniting on the Bible: this union exists now: why then ask for a union that you already acknowledge? I am afraid, Mrs. Newel, that your preacher’s notion of union on the Bible, means nothing less than a union with your denomination.”

“Pardon me, Mrs. Norton; but we think that although you believe the Bible, you yet do not understand it.”

“And pardon me, Mrs. Newel, but we think the same of you; and your people are certainly in a vast minority. And as for understanding the Bible in the original Greek and Hebrew, the denominations standing against your views possess a far

greater number of profound scholars, and men of talent and practical piety, than you can ever boast. You think you are right—we think we are right; and when doctors disagree, they must be allowed to differ. I tell you candidly, Mrs. Newel, I have heard your preachers ever since 1830, and I have heard other denominations all my life, and if I am any judge, your preachers differ more, far more, among themselves, than do the preachers I have heard among all the evangelical denominations of our country.”

“But, Mrs. Norton, other denominations cling to their creeds, and this makes their differences: if all would take the Bible, there would not be such contentions.”

“But, Mrs. Newel, if creeds make us differ, and your Church has none, then what makes the differences among your preachers? All the union with you, if I rightly apprehend the matter, is on the single doctrine of submersion for the remission of sins: on this point you have union, but on no other that ever I knew, except that of gaining all you can from other Churches.”

“Well you know, Mrs. Norton, when we find people in error, it is our duty to enlighten them.”

“O yes, madam, that is true, if their religious errors are in the way of final salvation; and you certainly believe your mother was a Christian and

went to heaven without being submersed : she was baptized by pouring, as I well remember.”

“Yes, Mrs. Norton ; we think God saves people through ignorance.”

“Well, Mrs. Newel, I never read in the Scriptures of ignorance being a means of salvation : unbelief is the only damning sin we read of, and ‘he that *believeth* hath everlasting life.’ But on this matter of creeds and union, Mrs. Newel, my opinion is settled. The Bible embraces a vast amount of facts and doctrines about which we may innocently entertain very different opinions. Were all people united in the same opinion, they might all be committed to some egregious fallacy, and there would be none to correct the misapprehension. But as the matter now stands, diversity of opinion leads to controversy and close investigations, which in the course of time give enlarged views of truth, and pour a flood of light on the doubtful cause of difference. Human opinions have never been altogether right since the fall of man, and any stereotyped union is an irrepressible barrier to mental progress. Again, there are certain doctrines of Scripture in which a practical belief is essential to salvation, as you admit, and there are many who profess to believe the Bible and call themselves Christians, who discard these doctrines as essential articles of Christian faith. Now it is essential for

the salvation of men that pious people should at least briefly sum up their articles of Bible faith in opposition to such dogmatists, and publish these creeds to the world, as distinguishable marks of orthodoxy in the flock where there are many wolves in sheep's clothing. It is the multitude of false teachers that makes a distinct profession of faith in certain articles of religion necessary on the part of true teachers; and those who hide their light among so many errorists, it seems to me are very ill-advised as to their duty. Every one ought to show his standard, and have no fears of unfurling his banners. In these times of false doctrine, I am afraid of those who refuse to express in positive words what are their articles of saving faith. And as for any external corporate union of all Churches, I am afraid of such a scheme: there is too much ambition in the human heart, too much attraction for ease, place, dignity, and power, to tempt men from humility, and to lead them to oppression and tyranny, for one to desire any such organization till Christ appear. The Roman Church was once pure; but it had a vast external unity, and you know how terribly it has corrupted its way. All its tyranny grew out of that very kind of unity you wish to promote. All the external unity I wish is that of an official recognition among all denominations of evangelical Christians, that each

belongs to Christ—that is union enough. And certainly, Mrs. Newel, you never expect that such a unity of the Church as you propose will be at all practicable before the coming of Christ.”

“Yes, Mrs. Norton, we do. We think there are to be vast changes in the world, and that everybody will adopt our views.”

“On what grounds do you hope it, Mrs. Newel?”

“Why, madam, the Lord says he will cut the work short in righteousness.”

“Do you mean by miracle?”

“I don’t know how, Mrs. Norton.”

“God works by means, Mrs. Newel; and to expect an end without ordinary gospel means, is rather visionary, I should think; and besides, if you should not be in the right, you would likely be cut short in the Lord’s work. For my part, when I remember how many multiplied thousands are violently opposed to your reformation as unnecessary, unreasonable, and impracticable, I see no earthly chance of your people doing any thing more than to build up another *sect* of religionists; and as you preach against the existence of all sects, your practice does violence to your own creed.”

“Well, Mrs. Norton, you know I believe you are a true Christian. We hope to get you some day. Come and hear our preachers. I think you would like them.”

“Very well, madam, I am a Methodist Christian. The old ship has carried thousands safe to the kingdom, and I expect to journey in it safely to the good country, and I fear that you are deluded, and that you will make shipwreck of your faith. Without faith and regeneration, Mrs. Newel, your baptism will not save you. I believe you are now a good woman; you really wish to save people from destruction; but, Mrs. Newel, I entreat you not to let your zeal for God degenerate into that of a proselyter from other Churches: you know such a character has little credit for generosity, justice, or piety.”

“Well, Mrs. Norton, I’ll take a walk with you in your garden, and look at your spring flowers: I see you are gardening very early.”

“With pleasure, Mrs. Newel. I hope we will walk in the garden above.”

CONVERSATION ON METHODIST USAGES, WITH MR.  
PORTER.

At another time Mrs. Norton was jocularly aroused in a fashionable company to defend her Methodist peculiarities, and did so with no little effect.

“I understand, Mrs. Norton, that you are opposed to wine-parties,” said Mr. Porter.

“Of course I am,” was her reply.

“Well, Mrs. Norton, I was at one of your meetings at the church, and really the company looked to me very much like a wine-party.”

“I never was present at a regular wine-drinking party, Mr. Porter, and of course cannot judge of the analogy from observation. And, sir, if a wine-party is as much overjoyed with spirits as are the Methodists in a revival, I hope never to be present at one. Externally, Mr. Porter, the expressions of joy may be the same in either case; but the causes of them at a wine-party are purely and grossly sensual, while those of a revival are infinitely above any such carnality. At the day of Pentecost, the people said the disciples were full of new wine, though, you know, sir, the cause of their wild ecstacy was directly from Heaven. If the ecstacy of a Methodist revival is really from the Divine Spirit, as we believe it is, I cannot but fear your comparison is a dangerous one for you.”

“How so?”

“Why, sir, the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is never forgiven, consists, as I think, in referring the operations of the Holy Spirit to an ignoble cause. And if, sir, a revival, with its attendant delights, is of the Spirit, then any sport made of it is virtually in contempt of the Holy Ghost. If you ridicule the idea of a revival proceeding



from such Divine cause, you but ridicule the cause itself."

"But, Mrs. Norton, I was educated to believe that the idea of the operations of the Spirit was a Methodist delusion."

"Some of us have been improperly taught, Mr. Porter; but when we could know better, and refuse light, we are personally responsible for wilful ignorance. Since the day of Pentecost the Christian dispensation has been one of the Spirit; and all the evangelical prosperity of the Church is now from the direct operations of that Spirit. You remember, sir, that Christ said, 'If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth.' Again, the prophet said, 'In the last days,'—that is, in the Christian age,—'I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,'—sinners as well as Christians,—'and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,'—that is, they shall teach the truth of the gospel,—'and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy,'—that is, they shall speak from Divine impulses. Now, sir, that Spirit was to come on 'all flesh,' and especially upon Christian men and women, and was to abide

with them for ever. That operation of the Spirit is still found everywhere, in the Church and out of it, and revivals must be the fruits of its impulses. You ought not then to be quite so free in comparing a revival to a drunken revel."

"O, I admit the operations of the Spirit; but they are through the word."

"And what is the word, Mr. Porter?"

"'My word is spirit,' Mrs. Norton."

"But you do not mean to say it is identical with the Holy Ghost? that would be absurd. Christ says, 'The Holy Ghost shall guide you into all truth—he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you,'—that is, he shall show them the word of Christ, which you call spirit. The word of Christ may always be attended by the Holy Spirit; but this Spirit may act on hearts that never heard the gospel word. On the day of Pentecost He came without any special preaching or reading of the word, and so doubtless does now."

"But, madam, may not a man be converted in the act of baptism?"

"Certainly he may, Mr. Porter; and then again, he may be baptized without being really regenerated; and he may be converted and have the Holy Ghost either before or after baptism. Peter baptized those at the house of Cornelius after they

were baptized by the Holy Ghost; and of others it is said, ‘The Holy Ghost as yet was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus—then laid they their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost.’ Mr. Porter, do you believe those were Christians that had received the gift of the Holy Spirit?”

“Well really, madam, it seems to me they were.”

“Then, sir, it is a plain case that some persons were Christians before baptism as truly as afterwards; for they received that gift *before* baptism.”

“Mrs. Norton, allow me to ask you a sincere question. Do you not think that the excitement in a revival is more the result of animal feeling than of sound understanding?”

“If you will state, definitely, what you mean by animal feeling, I will answer you.”

“I cannot define it precisely, Mrs. Norton.”

“You are in the dilemma of all I ever heard use the expression. I never knew any one that had a well-defined idea of it; nor do any two persons possess the same views as to its meaning; and, really, I am persuaded that it is a phrase without any well-defined meaning. I have given it a definition of my own. I understand it to be a blind impulse put in motion without any *rational* cause.”

“I accept your definition, madam.”

“Well, sir, allow me to use a figure, and then

ask you a question. Suppose a steamer is on fire in the Mississippi, and it is impossible to reach the shore : would not universal fear seize the passengers for their personal safety ? Would not the first impulse be flight from danger ? Would you call this excitement mere animal feeling ? Is not the instinct of self-preservation in rational beings distinct from the blind impulse of brute panic ?

“I certainly think self-preservation is the first law of nature ; but under its influence people often lose all self-possession, and take the worst steps to save themselves.”

“Precisely so, Mr. Porter ; but suppose they all see an open and plain way of safety : will not their earnest desire of escape lead them to move in that direction, especially if they are guided, and warned, and entreated to take it ?”

“It will generally, Mrs. Norton ; but sometimes people will go in the wrong direction in spite of remonstrances.”

“But such cases are very few, Mr. Porter, and exceptions to the rule. But even these, if directed rightly, will, by the assistance of friends, be saved. Even in their blindness, if they move in the right direction, they are sure to escape. Now, sir, we are on our way to eternity ; our vessel, crowded with passengers, is on fire ; the gospel is giving the alarm, and many are suddenly aroused to their

danger. In flying for safety, Christ alone is ‘the life, the truth, and the way;’ and however full of fear the heart may be, none can be lost who fly to him; for, ‘Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.’ Prayer to God—sincere prayer to God—always results in salvation. Prayer implies faith, repentance, and a life of piety; so that ‘who-soever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ Your panic-stricken ones who fly in any other direction than to Christ, are those blinded by animal passion, and not those who come weeping and kneeling before God at the altar of prayer, and in the house of prayer. And as there is joy to friends on shore over those who escape from a wreck at sea, and as there is joy in heaven over sinners that repent, so the joys you falsely suppose animal, and which Christians experience at the conversion of their neighbors and kindred, are the highest of which our nature is susceptible: they are angelic, pure, artless, and godlike. You may object to our tears, and noise, and expressions of happiness; but were your father, your mother, and your sisters to escape from sudden and impending death, and you were to give none of those natural manifestations of joy so common on like occasions, you would be regarded as not only cold-hearted, but absolutely unfeeling and vicious. Our noise is innocent. It detracts from the good fame of none,

nor filches the property of any; it may ring through the air for a moment, but its echo soon dies upon ill-natured ears. Methodist shouts never disturb Methodist devotion; all things on earth that move with power, give the sound of their motion; and you need not upbraid Methodism because the wings of its power thunder as they fly. As well might you chide the dove for the hurtling of its pinions through the air. I hope, sir, yet to raise a note of triumph over your conversion to God, and to see you, not joyful 'with wine, but filled with the Spirit.'"

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## CHAPTER VII.

EFFORTS FOR THE CONVERSION OF OTHERS—LETTER TO E. H.—DEVOTION TO HER CHURCH—DEATH OF A SINNER—PARTIES OF PLEASURE—CONFERENCE—WOMAN'S SPHERE TOO NARROW—CONVERSION OF MAJOR THRASHLEY—OF M'ILVAINE.

WHEN the work of redemption is completed, heaven will be replete with the glorified. Its seats will be filled, its mansions tenanted, and its table without a vacant place. Each harp will be tuned, each crown worn, each robe appropriated; no desolation, no solitude, no silence or gloom will exist. As years glide away, the hosts of Israel draw near to the citadel of the last enemy. Our Captain has withdrawn from the actual scene of contest to a mountain of observation. From the hill of Zion he surveys at a glance the whole arena, and his angel aids around him are sent hither and thither to press the battle where signals of distress are visible. From time to time the weary and war-worn are ordered to retire from the field. Taking their stations around the mount, they refresh themselves for a season, and abide as reserves, to join the contest again when the last emergency arrives. At length the vast army of Satan will



waver on the field; its lines will be broken, and the rout begin. Then our Captain will sound the last trumpet, and call the reserves to the last charge. Then the ransomed legions will rush like flying stars, and set the heavens on fire. Then will they take vengeance on those that obey not the gospel. The ruin of the foe will be complete. Saints and angels will witness the death of the last enemy. Then there will be glory enough for all—the kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven. To the Christian these things will be real; to his faith they are already present; he counts all earthly gain as loss compared with what shall be revealed in him. But while such riches and honor await him, there is no selfishness in his heart with reference to them, nor is there a single motive to selfishness that can inspire jealousy of the salvation of others. Indeed, the very first moment we are translated from darkness to light, and partake of the Divine nature, we instinctively and irrepressibly desire that all the world shall go with us to heaven. Taking up the call of the Spirit along the river of life, we repeat it to all, as soon as we have tasted of its waters. As love prompted the Son of God to seek and save the lost, so when we bear his likeness, like him we long to see all returning to the fold of God. This inspiration is not that of sect or party; it is not from prejudice or

natural affection; its spring is unearthly, its impulse Divine.

With this loving zeal for the eternal good of others, Mrs. Norton was deeply imbued. It was not an intermittent spring, but steady and perennial in the flow of its even tide. When times of refreshing from the Lord visited the Church, she improved the visitation with unwonted alacrity; and was ever instant in season and out of season, and in labors most abundant for the salvation of all within her influence. For this she visited; for this she improved her casual visits; this purpose was prominent in her correspondence and foremost in her conversation; it warmed her prayers, tuned her songs, and often caused her sleepless nights of anxiety. It kept her heart ever in commotion; it moved her tears, and sent her with unwearied feet to the house of sorrow and distress. Resting or roaming, in sickness or in health, among acquaintances or strangers, from youth to later years, it was her memorial that she sought to win others to Christ. In reviewing her correspondence, the most persistent efforts to persuade others to become Christians are observable. With an unwearied pen, for more than twenty years, she is found pursuing her cherished friends with steady exhortations, and persuasions to prepare for eternity. To peruse many letters is often

considered wearisome ; yet a few of Mrs. Norton's have been selected as specimens of her constant frame of mind, and of her zeal for God, which, it is believed, will be read with interest.

LETTER TO MR. E. H., APRIL 16, 1823.

This letter was to a young gentleman who had lived in her household while attending the university. In one of her remarks she says : “ I think you can appreciate a friend, even though that friend be a female much older than yourself ; and I trust you will allow her, at least in some degree, to assume the monitor. I may be presuming, but I think you will respect my sincere expression of esteem for you. . . .

“ I have received your letter, and hold converse awhile with my young friend. You mention your conduct on the morning you left us with regret ; but believe me there was no need of apology, nor of language to express feelings which were manifest in all your deportment. You say, ‘ Perhaps our friendship may die.’ Do not for a moment harbor such a thought ; for friendship based on proper principles is lasting as the mind. Do you know that I indulge the hope that friendship such as this will bloom in immortality ? By your letters cannot I enter into your feelings, and be acquainted with the general state of your mind ? and

by mine may you not learn my real sentiments of heart? and will you not regard my effusions, however *admonitory*, as the manifestation of a pure and sincere friendship? I sometimes think it an omen for good that you are associated in my mind with hallowed objects. Association of ideas is in me very strong. Sometimes the most apparent trifle opens a vista through departed years. A strong current of air always forcibly reminds me of running waters, and of the lovely streams on whose banks I so often strayed when life was new, and care had not disturbed my repose. The wings of the wind never bear to me the perfume of certain flowers, but with them rush the recollections of youth, and of the spot, overgrown with flowers, where my forefathers lived. Music recalls to me the days and the friends which death and distance have separated from me. Like a distinct landscape, they rise and pass before me, and disappear. And shall not eternity restore my friends? You ask if ‘I ever feel a disposition to weep, and give up to momentary grief for the sake of mournful pleasure?’ I answer, ‘Often.’ I do not call this a useless matter. In those delicious moments of mournful joy, I feel conscious of a divinity within that is immortal. Your feelings so touchingly described must teach your own eternity. Like the caged bird, the soul struggles to gain its native ele-

ment. It mourns while detained in this body of sin and infirmity. If in this life we feel so much, what must be our emotions when freed from clay, if purified through the atonement? Shall we neglect this illustrious guest? Shall we offer it food that will unfit it for celestial flight? Shall it be defiled and clogged with sin, and lost for ever? Let us guard this precious treasure; let it be cleansed by a Saviour's blood, and thus prepared for ineffable delights. . . Some of your sentiments were painful to me—your better judgment will not assent to them. . . I wish you always to write me what you *feel* and *think*; but I wish you to avoid, if possible, such *thoughts*. Your description was interesting and sublime. At such a season remember God. Nothing but the interposition of the Divine hand could have rescued you from involving yourself and others in deepest woe. It may be said, 'It happened so;' but 'such chances Providence obey.' Then acknowledge God, adore his goodness, and where you cannot fully comprehend, be not impatient, but *trust*. . . . Your enjoyments must be of a refined nature, and those of religion are refined. God has blessed you with a strong mind, and his kind hand would lead you by a way you have not known; would show you there is no tranquillity independent of piety. I am often strongly led to believe you are yet to become an ornament

to the Christian religion. You complain that nothing on earth can make you happy. . . O, it is the religion of the glorious Son of God that restores peace to the unhappy. . . I believe, and can write from experience, that religion gives peace to the troubled heart. . . What more could you ask than the religion of the New Testament? . . Now, my young friend, if you have any confidence in me, will you not at least *consider* a subject so important to your *present* and eternal happiness? Do go to hear Mr. Johnson. I think him one of the excellent of the earth. I have wished you to hear some of Mr. Light's sermons lately—they were truly sublime."

In this first letter to Mr. H., Mrs. Norton brings forward religion as the principal theme, and through four closely written pages urges its claims; and in every successive letter to the day of her death, she gave line upon line, and precept upon precept. In other letters, she breathes the same ardor for the personal salvation of those to whom she writes. In January, 1824, she says, "I believe my letters will be sacredly revered by you: in them I have endeavored to lead you to virtue and piety, as to those means which soothe us in the present life, and fit us for the life to come. I wrote from experience, and if my letters have had any influence on your character, I am more than gratified."

## DEVOTION TO HER CHURCH.

In 1824, she writes to an irreligious friend as follows :

“Lexington is, as you may conjecture, much as it was last winter—I believe not quite so gay. Dr. Holly’s ‘metaphysical lectures’ commenced some time since. I heard his introductory, and was pleased. I expected to have attended regularly; but the lectures commenced at six o’clock, and continued three nights in the week, two of them interfering with our meeting nights. I confess that my taste is old-fashioned enough to prefer Mr. Light with the BIBLE for his text-book to Dr. Holly with *Brown* for his : this is the honest reason why I am not *deep* in metaphysics. By this time useful knowledge of every kind is desirable to me, and I trust I have some taste for its acquisition; but that knowledge immediately from above, which leads more directly to nature’s God, to his perfections, which inspires me to worship and obey him as the source of all being and good—the knowledge which makes me acquainted with my own heart, and leads to examination and amendment of character—such knowledge I deem of the highest importance to me. O my friend, it is only the knowledge of God that can prepare us for life. What is all beneath the sun to us if, when summoned to die, we have



the rudiments of religion to learn? We should, above all things, know God for ourselves."

#### DEATH OF A SINNER.

This passage was written to a friend, in 1824. She says :

"How shall we appear before Jehovah? Surrounded as we are by gospel light, we are certainly without excuse if we repent not. God must be to us a God of justice, and if not reconciled to him through atoning blood, how shall we stand before him? These suggestions have been partly occasioned by the dying words of an acquaintance. Late-ly, in the prime of life, he entered eagerly into all its follies. He almost thought religion and religious people unworthy of notice. He scarcely deemed a minister of God worth listening to. But this poor dear friend, when on his death-bed, though a man of firmness in life, said, 'I would willingly cast myself on a Saviour's mercy, if I only *knew how*.' Mournful ignorance! I was present when his afflicted wife and weeping family in anguish surrounded him. He was calm as could be expected, but if worlds could have purchased him consolation in Christ, and triumph in death, they would, if possible, have been freely given. O, 'in that dread moment how the frantic soul ran to each avenue, and shrieked for help, but shrieked in vain:

the foe, like a staunch murderer, stood steady to his purpose, and, forced to the eternal verge, the sinner sank for ever.' Is this a dream? I would it were. . .

"My letter has again become serious, but I make no excuse; the solemn importance of religion is my *best* apology. May you and I be saved with an everlasting salvation."

#### PARTIES OF PLEASURE.

Mrs. Norton had but little taste for large social assemblies; smaller companies of friends were to her delightful and profitable. The following extract expresses her opinions very candidly :

"Oct. 4, 1825. . . . I am and have been much engaged lately, and am now very much hurried. . . . Mr. J. A., who you recollect as a favorite of Mr. Norton and myself, was married last Thursday night. We were at the wedding, and we intend giving him a party one day this week; and I suppose it can be nothing else than a *squeeze*. This, with preparing to start on our journey to you next week, will keep us very busy. You know that crowds and large parties are not congenial to me, and I never go to them—never when I can avoid it; but I cannot avoid giving them, out of friendship. This may seem inconsistent; but it is so—I cannot explain."

## THE CONFERENCE.

Mrs. Norton delighted in all meetings pertaining to her Church, and especially in those of the Annual Conference; and as often as possible was present, though she sometimes reached them through long and fatiguing journeys.

The operations of our economy are always inspiring. People and preachers, after a few years of intimate friendship, are sundered for years, or until the last trumpet. The mutual acquaintance of the Church and ministry is, with us, very extensive, and the Conference is our common place of reunion, if it occurs after separation. If we station ourselves at the reception point as the preachers come up from their distant fields of labor, we are likely to meet with incidents at once thrilling and delightful. In every direction, towards the first Tuesday of the Conference week, we may see the highways dotted with travelling strangers. As they approach, the preachers in waiting begin to guess who they are. Conversation waxes warm. Methodists who have come from distant sections to see their old preachers, look earnestly at the comers, and emotion begins to swell as their former pastors are named as at hand. One after another as they come on, loud bursts of congratulation, and shaking of hands, and gleams of joy, accompanied

with shining tears or glistening eyes, produce sensations that extend to disinterested spectators. It reminds the Christian strongly of the great Conference above, where those who have gone before will stand together, and guess at and congratulate the pilgrims and soldiers as they enter the city of God on every side, and hasten to congregate at the temple of light. None enjoyed a Conference reunion more than Mrs. Norton. She has written no essay upon the subject; but in numerous letters she speaks of it in terms of delight. Writing on one occasion to a friend who enjoyed the privilege of which she was deprived, she says, (1825:)

“O how much I should have been delighted to have been at the Conference! Perhaps to you it has been of little interest. You hear too often with a criticizing spirit, and you lose the substance in the letter. You ought to be a Christian; for, my friend, to be a Christian is to gain for the heart an object at once so pure and so great, that there is little danger of *loving it* too much, or of loving it *improperly*. ‘Religion, without destroying the affections, controls and employs them, and, like the fabled transmuting power, turns all it touches into gold.’”

#### LIBERTY OF WOMAN TOO CIRCUMSCRIBED.

While much has been done for the elevation of the social position of woman, there are yet many

prerogatives of which she is improperly denied. She is still fettered with shackles of a refined barbarism with which prejudice binds her refined nature. There is too much distrust of woman; too much of tyrannical surveillance exercised over her; she is the subject of too much penitentiary education and discipline to admit the full-orbed display of her truly delicate and superior character. A line of demarcation between the duties of the sexes should exist; but too much of isolation and separateness are injurious to society. Woman is not a mere creature of sense and show; and wherever custom renders her a mere material appendage to social life, it should be promptly annihilated. Mrs. Norton's views on woman's sphere are admirable, and a few are here presented. In 1828, she writes to a distinguished friend as follows :

“I write just what I think. But while I would have you think of me as I deserve, I candidly acknowledge that to have the good opinion of my fellow-creatures is gratifying. The esteem of men of sense and refinement and of *superior talents*, I think I have a mind capable of appreciating. I hope I shall always maintain an independent and dignified course, and enjoy an interchange of thoughts with gifted spirits.

“The world is not just towards our sex and mind; its customs are tyrannical, and calculated to

keep us almost *dunces*. If a woman dare to talk good sense, and refuse to enter into the commonplace chit-chat of the day, she is at once ignored as eccentric, sentimental, etc., etc.; and to correspond with any gentleman but her husband, why, it is just tolerated, and hardly that. I am aware of all this, and must acknowledge its influence on me, and believe it has prevented me from receiving and giving benefit. I cannot believe the enlargement of our minds would make us masculine in our manners. Were that to be its effect, then keep us in ignorance. To deprive us of intellectual intercourse with the other sex, when innocent and instructive, betrays a want of respect and confidence not only mortifying but degrading to us. Are personal charms the only excellence man sees in woman? •

“The influence of woman, as it is called, is, I fear, but the influence of material beauty. But this, sir, be it ever so great, is but dust in the balance compared to the charms of refined female intellect. It is true, and melancholy as true, that many gifted female writers have injured our cause by forgetting the real dignity and modesty of our sex. But, thanks to the enlightening, refining, and purifying influences of religion, the time is near when father, husband, and brother will trustingly

confide in her whose principles are holy, and whose thoughts are controlled by a spotless mind. . . .

“I send you Dr. Chalmers’ Evidences of Christianity. O that God may be known to you as the author of your salvation.”

#### CONVERSION OF MAJOR THRASHLEY.

Major Thrashley was a gentleman of influence and fortune, and his family was extensive and elegant. He came from Virginia, and settled in Woodford county, Kentucky. He had been a Baptist preacher; but abandoning the pulpit, became, professedly, an infidel, and was devoted to the pursuit of wealth and pleasure. While in this condition, Mrs. Norton made his acquaintance. Being deeply concerned for his salvation, she made it a subject of prayer and personal effort. She visited his house in company with his daughter, Mrs. Keen, of Lexington, and broached the concealed object of her heart. He stated to her his past history and experience, confessing that he had been once a minister of the gospel, but denied the reality of vital piety. “Mrs. Norton,” says her husband, “then took up the subject with great liberty of speech for *two whole days*, when her arguments confounded him. He then went to church and made open profession of his reclamation through



Mrs. Norton's conversations. He remained in the Church until his death."

The sensation produced by Major Thrashley's open profession is said to have been wonderful: many were induced by it to become religious: his family were all converted, and some of them still live to testify of the grace of God through Mrs. Norton's zeal. The Major died in the triumphs of faith, and was doubtless in the throng of the glorified that gave Mrs. Norton "an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord." The following letter will illustrate the glory of his reclamation.

MAJOR THRASHLEY'S LETTER TO MRS. NORTON.

"SEPTEMBER 13, 1814.

"MY DEAR SISTER:—Glorious news! The Lord is with me of a truth! Such love-feasts! such holy desires! such heavenly breathings for hours together! such floods of tears of gratitude I never experienced before. Sometimes I have almost faith to believe 'your spirit is with me.' I feel that the Lord has heard your cries and prayers for me. I love you, my sister, for God's sake—a love that the world knows nothing of. I feel determined to walk with God, and want you to walk with us. I feel the fear of the Lord before my eyes. I feel, as I told you some time ago, like a

piece of soft wax; and I want my God to stamp his own image upon me. Dear sister, the tears flow so fast at this time that I can scarcely see to write, and hold my head on one side to keep the tears from my paper. My sweetest times for two days have been about an hour before day—I awoke and God was with me. I have faith that the Lord is doing a great work by you. Sometimes I feel like I want the Lord to set me to work; but I am afraid to fetch one step for fear of doing wrong. I feel so much insufficiency that I am afraid; but I take comfort when I reflect that my desires are holy. I am not satisfied with faith alone; I want knowledge, temperance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. Tell me, my sister, can such desires come from any but God? Tell Mr. Norton I want him to walk with us; that I have a heart large enough to take him and all the world to heaven. Tell Patsy I feel like the Lord would help her. When I reflect what a poor, feeble faith I had on Sunday last, it appears that I might have smothered it, and lost it for ever, had I not snatched hold of that moment to proclaim it. But blessed be God that you gave me courage. Pray, my sister—wrestle with God for me, that I may know how to serve him. My whole desire is for holiness. That favorite text that was applied to my soul a few days ago, still hovers over me—‘Blessed are

they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.' Pray write me every opportunity, and let me know whether you are growing in grace or not. My refreshing is from the Lord—I feel him present—I shall surely pray for you. Adieu for this time.

“T. THRASHLEY.”

The childlike fervency of this letter will be appreciated by many who have had the same experience.

“Perhaps you think I'm wild,  
Or simple as a child,”

is often sung by the happy Christian to the astonished unbeliever; and his explanatory response is simply this:

“I am a child of glory!  
Just born from above:  
My heart is Christian love!  
I love to tell the story.”

Thank God for humble, childlike religion! Thousands have enjoyed it in other years; and thousands everywhere enjoy it now. Though simple, it is not silly; though ardent, it is not fanatical; humble and sincere, it is godlike and full of immortality.

#### CONVERSION OF MRS. M'ILVAINE AND FAMILY.

Mrs. C. S. M'Ilvaine is the wife of a brother of Bishop M'Ilvaine, of Ohio. Her letter is interesting: it is another illustration of the fact that Mrs.

Norton allowed no opportunity to escape of pressing home, courteously but promptly, the great duty of knowing the love of God experimentally.

LETTER OF C. S. M'ILVAINE.

“NEW YORK, AUGUST 28, 1849.

“MY DEAR FRIEND:—The recurrence of the cholera among us forcibly recalls past events, which caused us so much distress. The recollection of your good husband's sincere friendship evinced during life to my dear parents, and its warmth, shown after death, (yes, even cold marble shows it,) fills my heart, when I dwell upon it. To you, my dear friend, under God, I think *our* family are indebted for the awakening of our minds to a deep sense of the importance of religion. I well remember when the first true idea of the Holy Spirit's power and influence first dawned upon my mind: you were relating the conviction and conversion of some one. I often think of you—the many, *many* happy hours I have passed with you; the days when we read together, worked or rode: what a *treat* it was to spend the day *alone* with you, while you read aloud! I have lately been looking over ‘Young.’ As you first excited in me an admiration for his poetry, it is natural that I always associate you in my thoughts while reading it. It seems a fit time for such poetry now—to reflect upon time, death,

eternity, immortality. He is a grand poet. I remember how I used to admire your faculty of memory, you could recall striking lines so readily : it is an enviable power. I hope you may always retain it."

## CHAPTER VIII.

BASCOM—ROSS—DEATH-SCENE.

THE correspondence in this chapter extends from 1828 to 1841. It will be interesting in the highest degree to some readers. It is fragmentary, but will recall to some now living the dreamy scenes of days that are sweetly enshrined in holy memories.

LETTER TO BASCOM—LOVE OF THE OLD CHURCH.

“LEXINGTON, OCTOBER 31, 1828.

“MY GENEROUS FRIEND—When I received your letter from Pittsburg, I was preparing for a visit to the Barrens, and as far south as Nashville. I concluded not to write until our return. We stayed much longer than our first intention, and took Louisville and the *Conference* at Shelbyville in our return route, arriving here night before last. . . . In my friendships I am *English*—*all* English. I have heard some of those sayings that you speak of, but do not for a moment believe that you have not many warm friends on *our side*, as you term it, or *will have it*. Positively I am not enough in-

formed on the subject to reason on it. I do feel a warm side for old Methodism—primitive Methodism—and know very little about the *Reform question*. It may be prejudice or *English* stupidity again, but I love my Church as I do my friends, and cannot bear to think it has any faults. This you will say is weakness; but I grant I am a very woman, and of course the weaker vessel; and St. Paul, who *knew* our sex, has prohibited or *exempted* us from Church government affairs; and I am glad of it.

“But, seriously, there are many with us who are willing to think and let think; who will not believe every flying report, nor sit *silently* by and hear you defamed. I am truly sorry there is so much warmth and party feeling between those who should be of *one* heart and *one* mind, and *that* the mind of him who was meek and lovely. O, my brother, when will these controversies cease, and brotherly love be restored to our Zion? . . . I dined on Sabbath, in S., with Bishop Roberts. Soon after I saw him, he said, ‘I have lately seen our mutual friend, Henry B., and heard him preach,’ etc. What an amiable man he is! Don’t you think Bishop Soule a *great* man? I do. I heard some excellent preaching at Conference. . . . We certainly expect you here; and whether you care about seeing us or not, remember your *home* is on



the hill; and though the roses are faded, and we have not many inducements to lead you here, I can at least assure you a *warm* reception and a *heartly* welcome. How I do wish you and Brother Ross might meet here!"

REV. MR. ROSS.

The memory of Mr. Ross is treasured in Lexington as one of the loveliest men ever known in that city. In person he was elegant; in gracefulness of manners unsurpassed; in abilities the rival of Bascom or Summerfield; and in fervid piety a seraphic flame. As a minister, his services were sought by all denominations, and his ministrations were everywhere thronged with a delighted and profited auditory. He was editor of the "Gospel Herald." Its pages were instinct with force, and radiant with beauty: when he finished a theme, all was said that was demanded; clear, pointed, and pleasant, he seemed to cure by the very wounds he made, and all said of him, "Let the righteous smite me, and it will be a kindness." Such men remain briefly below—"early they take a passport to the skies." The gleam of promise on the clouds of our sphere, they are the momentary harbingers of what earth shall be when the shades of error shall disperse, and earth be trod by angel feet through the bright Sabbath of our God.

Mr. Ross was born and brought up in Baltimore, and highly educated. He removed to Jonesboro', Tennessee, and engaged in commercial business. Owing to his native generosity, and unfortunate endorsements, he failed in business. Riding into the town one evening, he saw several persons approaching the Methodist house of worship to attend a prayer-meeting. Reaching home, and supper over, he said to his wife, "I have never attended a Methodist meeting in my life, though brought up in a city of Methodism; and I feel like going to their prayer-meeting to-night." His wife responded, "I have all the evening been thinking how much I would like to go there to-night myself." They both immediately set out, and reached the house before services were fairly begun. All the attendants were ladies, except one man and some few negroes. This one man was a very plain, common-looking person; and as he took up the Bible and hymn-book to begin the services, Mr. Ross felt mortified that he had come. During the reading, singing, and prayer, his views and feelings underwent a great change. The perfect simplicity and sincerity of all engaged struck him as the surest testimony of unostentatious and true piety, and he felt as in the vestibule of the mercy-seat. A shade, however, came over him as he began to wonder who would pray next, as there were no other men

in the house but himself and the leader. The idea of so plain a man as the leader calling upon any of the fine-looking ladies there to pray, seemed presumptuous ; he thought they ought to resent such a call, as insulting. The hymn, however, being ended, one of the ladies was asked to pray ; and to his astonishment she began. All knelt but himself and wife. The clear, humble, sweet tones of prayer, with its heavenly spirit, soon took hold of his wife, and she slipped upon her knees. He felt he was alone, and occupying an indecorous attitude, and so slipped quietly down in the dust with the others. As the prayer continued, his heart became solemn ; then tender ; then awful ; then overwhelmed. He turned towards his wife and heard her sobbing aloud, and then too the fountain of his soul was moved. Two stricken sinners were there in that humble prayer-meeting. Their wounds were deadly, unless the Good Physician should heal them. They sought the Lord there in that house, till they found him, and they had no pride to carry them to rich churches : where they were convicted and converted, there they were willing to worship God.

Here is an example that should encourage women to pray, as those did at the day of Pentecost. Prayer-meetings will always be owned of God. We need never despair. The humble on earth can,

with united prayer, lift the windows of heaven and let down floods of salvation; can break up the great fountains of mercy, and cause converting power to go forth like the waves of the sea. Who knows but at length your faithful prayer may be the humble but efficient means of leading some wanderer to God, or of leading to the ministry some Paul, Apollos, or Cephas?

“Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;  
Prayer makes the Christian’s armor bright;  
And Satan trembles when he sees  
The weakest saint upon his knees.”

The history of Mr. Ross after his conversion is incidentally involved in Mrs. Norton’s letter to Bascom, giving an account of his death. To this let the reader attend, and learn how sweetly a Christian can die.

#### DEATH-SCENE OF MR. ROSS.

JANUARY 4, 1834.

MY DEAR BROTHER BASCOM:—Yours of the 29th came to hand just as I was starting in a sleigh to Major Hanly’s. We returned yesterday, leaving your very warm friend, E. Christian, in good health. This morning I sit down to answer you. . . . Little did I suppose when we passed you next morning what a year would bring forth, and I cannot think upon it now without deep feeling. In friendship I am a final perseveranceist, and I ask, are you

coming to see us before you go eastward? All your friends here wish very much to see you again soon. They speak kindly of you—especially Mrs. Hawkins, who says, “I wish he would come again.” We were all surprised that you passed us without stopping. We had hurried to have a new bedstead made for *your room*, and fully expected you to rest and spend some time with us. We were not sensible of any diminution of regard, and indeed you wronged us. I speak from a clear conscience. . . .

And now I would tell you of our beloved and never-to-be-forgotten Brother Ross. I heard him say that he was taught, when young, to think very contemptuously of Methodism. He was at length accidentally at a prayer-meeting—he thinks a female prayer-meeting—at which there were a few ladies, and some colored people. While one lady was at prayer, the Lord in mercy convicted him. Following the noble example of St. Paul, he instantly laid aside his prejudices, and followed the leadings of the Spirit. Among these people he remained seeking the Lord, and in a love-feast he received the witness of the Spirit. He soon began to preach that Jesus who had met him on his journey. It was truly a privilege to hear him. Being engaged in the mercantile business, and free from guile himself, he trusted too much to others, and

became seriously involved. This was told me by Sister Ross. She said he was so fearful of wronging any one, he had not done justice to himself. Being desirous of changing his location, and coming to Kentucky on business for his father-in-law, he was pleased with Lexington; and thinking it a good place to educate his children, he removed hither. Everybody was delighted with him. But O, how vain are all things here below! How secure we thought ourselves of such a blessed acquisition to our Church. As a man, a citizen, a Christian, and a preacher, all were charmed with him. But Heaven saw fit to disappoint us all. The confinement to his paper, his frequent public speaking, together with a hereditary weakness of lungs, conspired to hasten his death. Whilst preaching in Georgetown he was seized with a pain in his breast, and was never able to preach again. Though he lived months afterwards, and attended many meetings, he gradually sank under his disease. The summer was much against him, being damp and chilly. He delighted to ride out, and did so while he was able to sit on a horse, which he preferred to a carriage. Mr. Norton, who was devoted to him, took him out daily to the country till within ten days of his death. The next day he wished to ride, but Mr. Norton begged him not—told him he was too weak. He got on his horse, but finding his words

too true, he refrained. From that time he sank rapidly, and never left the house again.

A few days before his death, a few friends of us were sitting in his room while he appeared to be dozing. I observed that I had often heard Brother Ross say, "it was nothing for a Christian to die," and dwelt on several of his favorite sentiments. After some time he aroused and said, "It is nothing for a Christian to die, Sister Norton—it is nothing for a *Christian* to die: he has nothing to lose, but every thing to gain." As he said this, a most heavenly smile lit up his face, and he continued, "The *great thing* is to *be* a Christian." This was about three days before his death.

When I was sent for to see him die, I found him just out of a violent spasm of the lungs. He lay apparently easy, inclining, I thought, to stupor. Mrs. Ross begged me to let her come into the room, and I did so, as she promised to command her feelings. I have always thought it cruel to force any one away from a dear dying friend if they wish to stay. There were but two others in the room. We were silent a few moments, when Mrs. Ross took his hand and said, "O my husband, is there nothing you wish to say to me?" He roused and answered, "Yes, dear; I'll talk to you when I have more strength. I am very weak now, but am much better than a while ago." He



seemed to sleep, and had no idea he was dying. After a short time, Mrs. Ross, who saw he was sinking, could refrain no longer. She again took his hand, exclaiming, "O my dear husband, have you no request to make?" He replied, "When I am stronger, dear, then I'll tell you: I am better, but very weak." She continued to weep—when he observed, "I don't apprehend immediate death, as you do." I then begged Joseph Coales, who was with us, to tell him he was dying. I feared, and now believe, he would have sunk into a stupor from which it would have been impossible to rouse him. I then very tenderly said, "Brother Ross, you have not much time." He quickly asked, "Does the doctor think so?" I answered, "Yes; the doctor thinks it will not be long, and I thought it right to be faithful with you." "O yes, certainly," said he, in his sweetest manner—there was no start or confusion. "Well," said he, "then I wish to speak some." Then solemnly clasping his hands, he said, "My dear wife, I commit you and our dear children to that God in whose hands I am, through Jesus Christ." Mrs. Ross being much distressed, he put one arm around her, drew her towards him, and said, "Dear wife, this is a severe trial, I know it is, especially to you; but it is the Lord." After some time he continued: "You have been a dutiful, kind, and affectionate wife, and the

Lord will bless you. Your trials, no doubt, will be many and great; but follow the Lord, and he will comfort you. You will have much to contend with. The labor of rearing the children will be great; but the efficient means will be the grace of God."

Thus did he calmly and affectionately comfort his loved companion. She exclaimed, "O my dear husband, I will train up our children to follow in your footsteps—to follow your example." He quickly replied, "Not mine, dear; the Saviour's."

After a pause, he turned again to Mrs. Ross, who sat weeping in agony by the side of his bed, and said, "My dear, I expect you now to feel the comforts of religion. In the darkest hour be of good cheer. If God be for us, who can be against us?" Then raising his arm in his own graceful manner, and pointing to heaven, he exclaimed, "There's a bright world up yonder, dear wife. There we'll meet to part no more." And a ray of that heaven seemed at that instant to illuminate his face. Mrs. Ross becoming more distressed, was taken with cramp; while he, as though forgetful of himself, pointed to the mantel, where sat a bottle of Cologne, and said, "Get that and rub her;" after which she became more composed. He then asked if some one would not sing a hymn. I replied I would, if he would name one. He requested me to sing, "I'll praise my Maker while I have breath," etc.

A couple of friends, excellent singers, then coming in, it was sung to his favorite tune. He appeared wrapt in heavenly communion all the while, and when finished said, "That is what I wanted."

Brother Cooper coming in, he reached his hand and said in the calmest manner, "Well, Brother Cooper, the Lord is about to take me sooner than we expected. Will you try and meet me where we shall be severed no more?" His two eldest children having been sent for, from the country, the youngest was brought to him. He stretched out his emaciated arm, and clasping her to his bosom, said, in the sweetest and most solemn manner, "And he took little children in his arms and blessed them, and said, Of such is the kingdom of heaven. The Lord bless my child;" and then giving her back, he after some time asked if the doctor was gone. I went to the back door, and found him weeping like a child, for O, how he loved him! I told him Brother Ross wanted to see him. He went in and up to the bedside. Brother Ross said to him, in his own most peculiar manner, "Doctor, have you any patients to visit?" The Doctor said, "No." "O well then, you'll stay with me, won't you?" How perfectly divested of self was that precious man, even in death! Others were considered before himself. His sweet manner to Dr. Satterwhite plainly said, "Doctor, you can do no

more for me as a physician; but, my friend, my dear tried friend, if duty to others does not call you, stay with me. You have done all that skill could do to save me. I love you dearly—stay with me, my dear friend.” His manner spoke these things. He again desired us to sing, and asked for “On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand.”

His dear children were now all brought in. In the most calm and collected manner he looked on them for an instant, and then said: “James and Eliza, the Lord is now about to remove your father from this world to another—you will see him here no more. I want you to love your mother, and obey the commandments of the Lord, as I have often instructed you. Will you do this—will you do it?”

The little creatures answered, sobbing, “Yes.”

“Then,” said he, “you will be supported in life, you will be comforted and sustained in death, and then mother, father, and you will all meet in that eternal world above, to part no more.” Then clasping his hands, he solemnly prayed, “May the Father of the spirits of all men be the father of my children.” O, what an affecting scene! You must recollect how very interesting Brother Ross’s manner was. You remember how much dignity there was about him, and how graceful all his movements were—in death he was truly majestic.

“His comforters he comforts, great in ruin :  
With unreluctant grandeur gives, not yields  
His soul sublime, and closes with his fate.”

Dr. Blythe now came to take leave of him : of that I wrote you before : it was truly solemn.

Mr. Norton now came to him. In the most affectionate manner he said : “Mr. Norton, you have been most kind to me. I have felt an interest for you that I have never told you. Seek to know the gospel and its comforts. Put it not off to a dying-bed—’tis a poor place to prepare for death. Seek the Saviour and his religion. May the Lord bless you for all your kindness to me.”

Can my husband ever forget that scene and that prayer? God forbid. There was not a dry eye in the room when it was made.

After a silence of some time he observed, “I have much to say about my business, but have not strength.” They told him not to mind it; all should be attended to. “Then,” said he, “my friends will attend to the disposal of my body.” No one answered at that time. He looked around with apparent surprise, and asked, “Wont you?” Being promptly answered in the affirmative, he desired to be buried in his common wearing apparel. Very often during the three or four hours in which he was dying, he would stop his conversation, and say, with a sigh, “O, I am very tired!” but as if feeling the necessity of consoling others, he would

make the exertion to speak again. He never once complained, nor uttered a groan, nor asked for any thing, but lay perfectly composed : his manner was all calmness and serenity. O, I wish you had been there ; I can give you no just conception of the scene.

When Sister Ross found he was going, she could contain herself no longer. She had done wonders, poor thing ! While she hung over him, the tears running down her cheeks, he raised his dying-hand once more and wiped away her tears, then dropped his hand, and raised it no more. How eloquent was that action ! He had said all he could to comfort her, and when his voice was now no longer to be heard, his remaining strength was exerted to show his affection. His last act was to wipe away her tears with his dying-hand ! Mrs. Ross was now taken away, and about ten minutes before he died he asked if she were better, still careful of others to the last. His last action was to lay his left hand on his heart, while his right was most gracefully extended : in that way he gently slept in Jesus. So peaceful was the close of his blameless life, that the exact moment of his decease could not be told, though all were anxiously watching. He died about 3 o'clock P. M., August 4.

I think there was something remarkable in his death. When suddenly apprised that he was dying,

he was as serene as a summer evening. The exquisite sensibility and refinement so apparent in his life, was equally obvious in his death. Never, in all his sickness, did he complain, though he suffered great pain. There was no shout, but there was majestic glory in his departure. . . .

SARAH NORTON.



## CHAPTER IX.

MAFFIT—CORRESPONDENTS—MR. NORTON.

PERHAPS no minister in America ever gathered as many from the world into the Church as did Mr. Maffit. That he had more and fiercer maligners than any preacher of righteousness in modern times, may be readily conceded; but that he was guilty of any crime has never been proved. With so many foes both in the Church and out of it, it is incredible that, if criminal, he had not been early tried by his peers, and condemned to the infamy his foes assert he merited. He was not merely eloquent—he was in the most powerful sense an orator. Persecuted and forsaken, he was always going about doing good; turning many to righteousness, he fell in the glorious work; hunted down by malevolence, he died of a broken heart: his death was that of a Christian—he prayed for his enemies in his last agonies. He was buried in the new graveyard in Mobile, Alabama. Not a stone marks the grave of one of the most powerful seraphs that ever put lip to the trumpet of

mercy on the watchtowers of Zion. His dust is immortal, and will wake from its slumbers to glory again. Like others, he may have had his weaknesses; but we do not believe he was wicked; he regretted his imperfections, and never excused them; he was the traducer of none, nor can any affirm they were personally wronged by him. Honest, charitable, and affable, he seemed a gentleman and a Christian.

The frequent mention of him by Mrs. Norton, makes a notice of him here not at all impertinent: both Mr. and Mrs. Norton regarded him not only as a superior man, but as a useful and pious one. In 1837, Mr. Maffit preached awhile in Lexington, and she writes of him as follows:

“I hope I shall not always feel and be in such a stupid state of mind and body, should my life be prolonged.\* I did think Brother Maffit’s excellent sermons and extraordinary efforts would be of service to me, and in *one* sense I hope they have been. About the time you were here, the strong desire I had for the salvation of my dear husband absorbed every other thought. I then felt as if he would yield immediately to the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit, and still I have hope that he will never become so indifferent as he has been. Brother

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\* Mrs. Norton suffered many years with a disease peculiarly afflicting to her spirits.

Maffit is still in Lexington, and Mr. Norton has never omitted hearing him, with but few exceptions—never when he was in town. He was absent a few days, but the very day he returned he was willing to go to meeting, and is still going. I have not been well enough to be always there, but am thankful for the privileges I have and do enjoy. I rejoice to see Mr. Norton go *without* me: still he has taken no other decided step. When I reflect that for eight weeks he has been attending *constantly* upon the house of God, I cannot but hope. . . . Sixty were baptized—twelve by immersion. Mr. Norton took Brother Stevenson to and from the water in his buggy. . . . Next week Brother Maffit talks of leaving us for Harrodsburg, and on south towards home: many, many will be sorry to part with him. His congregations are still large, even during the week: it is astonishing how he continues to preach with profit and popularity. Mr. Norton says, ‘The longer he stays, the higher he rises:’ people seem to have tired of slandering him; and as for —, his very relations are ashamed of him and his story. His own sister said, if he reported any thing against Mr. Maffit, she would not believe him. I never *heard* he was ‘*a man of truth*’ until he slandered a Methodist preacher.”

Again, in writing the same year, she says, “Brother Maffit interested me very much, but the *effects*

of his preaching much more." In March, 1838, she says, "Brother Maffit has been in New Orleans, and is expected here this summer. At the last Quarterly Meeting there were one hundred and twelve read into full connection, out of the one hundred and thirty-seven who joined while he was here. Only six had been dropped, and nineteen were continued on trial. So you see that it is a slander that 'all his fruit drops off' as *soon as he leaves.*' He was made a great blessing to many of the different Churches here, notwithstanding the opposition he met with."

As there was much said against Mr. Maffit by defamers, and every word and action perverted, Mr. Norton was particular to know the truth of *some* of them. The following letter he has handed over for notice: "Mr. Maffit got in the stage at Maysville, on the morning of July 3d. I did not recognize him. After we had gone some distance, he turned round and politely handed me some newspapers. . . I introduced myself to him, after which we kept up a free and liberal conversation till we got to Paris, where we left the stage, in which conversation I was agreeably edified and entertained. I found Mr. Maffit pleasing in his manners, of fine fancy, and extensive general information. I confess I was delighted with his company, and it would be hard to convince me he is other than a good

man. We conversed freely on most subjects *but politics*. On them he was, I thought, *cautious* and *reserved*, and remarked that he thought it did not become a minister of the gospel to meddle much with politics. I replied, I should dislike to see politics enter the pulpit; but I thought it hard because a man was a minister of the gospel he should be deprived of the privileges of other men. Mr. Maffit said he thought with me, but that it should be touched lightly, and with a very delicate finger. Yet, although there was but little said, I thought I could gather that he was a republican of the old Jeffersonian school. I do not recollect of any persons in the stage except a young man of about eighteen, and a young lady."—August 5, 1840.

#### CORRESPONDENTS.

The correspondents of Mrs. Norton reveal her tastes and the high estimation in which she was held. From examination of their letters during a period extending from 1814 to 1849, they all appear to be persons of very high order of mind and cultivation. A few are gentlemen of the first rank in our country; the remainder are generally ladies of ardent piety. They all breathe the spirit of lofty admiration and devoted friendship: they write for counsel, and seldom give advice; they acknowledge indebtedness, and return the warmest gratitude;

they look to her as an anointed child of God, capable of instructing and consoling ; as blessed not only with superior gifts, but grace : a friend nearer the throne than they, and whose good offices are earnestly to be sought. Some are lawyers, some infidels, some politicians, some preachers ; some are rich, and others poor ; some are lonely, some in crowds ; some are rejoicing in hope, others mourning in despair ; some are overwhelmed with misfortune, others basking in prosperity ; but all expect and receive the kindest attention. Though not an official of the Church, nor in anywise affecting the masculine character, she was acknowledged as one of those "*handmaidens of the Lord*," on whom he had poured out his Spirit, whom he had qualified to instruct, to comfort, and to assist. Beyond this sphere she never essayed to pass. Energetic, prompt, and spirited, she was yet modest, unobtrusive, and retiring. The eulogies passed by her correspondents are exhibited in chaste and delicate lines, and were intended rather to cheer her in her works of love than to flatter by empty compliments. All esteemed her as a friend above vanity and ordinary weaknesses ; as a creature whose nature was like their own, but whose heart had been severely disciplined into conformity with a meek and lowly spirit ; not one addresses her but as an equal—not one but esteems her "better

than himself." One attributes his conversion to her exertions; another acknowledges with kindness her efforts to lead him to the cross; one returns gratitude for help in hours of need, another blesses her for comfort amid losses by mortality; one asks counsel and prayers; another thanks her in a dying-hour; one seeks her aid in a revival, and another asks her presence and friendship for a season on her way to heaven; one mentions her kindness at home, another abroad; all would be delighted to live in her company for ever.

#### MR. NORTON.

Mr. Norton was born in Pennsylvania, in ——. In 1802, he went to Louisville, Kentucky, and commenced business. The city at that time being very unhealthy, he returned to his native State in 1805. He was married to Miss Sarah Low in 1807, and, in 1812, returned to Kentucky, and settled in Lexington, where he resided until his death. In early life he was not very partial to the Methodists, and seemed to disbelieve in experimental religion, through a misapprehension of its nature. When fully advised by his wife of its true character, he cordially approved of it, and we think was made a partaker of it. Through all her life after marriage, it was Mrs. Norton's grief that her husband's name was not enrolled on the Church-



book with her own. In many of her letters to her friends, and in her conversations, his salvation was the burden of her heart, the sorrow which gave a sombre shade to all her joys, the cross that always bowed her spirits down. From his correspondence it seems, however, that he rested alone in Christ for salvation, and not in his works of charity. His reasons for not uniting with the Church are given by implication in a letter a few days prior to his death.

By the prudent management of his resources, he became a man of wealth; and though regarded by some as very covetous, there is reason to believe, from many an acknowledgment of favors to the needy, that he was a man of regular beneficence. He made no show of his good deeds; but because his right hand did not proclaim what his left hand did, it does not follow that he was not generous. He had no children, and many, as is commonly understood, seem to have presumed upon this fact to a practical ignoring of equal rights; and it has been remarked, that Mr. Norton was often nettled by allusions to this fact, when asking for promptness on the part of his debtors. The particulars of his last hours have not reached us; but we are constrained to think that Mr. Norton attempted to obtain heaven through the merits of Christ alone; this was his professed faith, though

up to his last sickness he seems to have made no *formal* profession to the Church of such faith. He feared God, and relied not on his own merits, but on Divine mercy.\*

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\* DIED, in this city, February 9, 1858, MR. JOHN NORTON, in the 75th year of his age.

Mr. Norton was a native of Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, and was married in 1807, to the estimable lady whom he followed to the grave only about nineteen months ago.

Mr. Norton had been a citizen of Lexington nearly fifty years, and in that time had been engaged extensively and successfully in commercial pursuits, and had been intimately identified with the growth and prosperity of the city.

He was connected financially with all, and officially with some, of the public internal improvements which were designed to contribute to the improvement of Lexington and its vicinity, and some of the improvements were successfully prosecuted under his faithful and vigilant superintendence. Mr. Norton was educated at a time and under circumstances favorable to the cultivation of a manly and dignified character; and if his virtues were not attractive, they were inflexible almost to severity and sternness. Such were the men of that generation—characterized by simplicity, firmness, and integrity: men “whose words were bonds—whose promises, oaths.”

If not by nature, certainly by education, he was a man of fine social feelings, polite and attentive to strangers, very courteous to his friends, and respectful to all classes. No one could be in his company without being impressed favorably with his urbanity, alike unaffected and dignified. Those who knew him most intimately, regarded him a benevolent man, especially to the poor; and while his charities were never asked in vain, he was in this particular thoughtful and considerate, not only giving but bestowing attentions and sympathy at a time and in a way that rendered them peculiarly serviceable and valuable.

For many years his excellent wife was the President of the Female Benevolent Society of this city, and in this way he became its patron, and in his last hours was not forgetful of this excellent institution,

The affection of Mrs. Norton for her husband seemed to pass the ordinary bounds of woman's love. They were often separated for months by business affairs, or by visitations to her early home; but, true as gravitation, her soul was attracted to him with painful longings of love. In December, 1818, in writing from Harrisburg, Pa., she says, "Well do I remember the spot on which we parted on the 6th of May. Alas! since then how much we both have suffered of anxiety! Many nights do I water my pillow with tears when thinking of you—tears witnessed only by the All-seeing eye. O, may that eye watch over you for good! May God watch over you, the dearest object to my fond heart on earth!"

1827. "O how delightful the anticipation of that abiding home you mention, my dear sister, when all that are near and dear to us shall be with God eternally. My heart yearns over my dear husband, and sometimes when I sit by his side and look at him, and think of his immortal soul, my

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that had been so often the grateful and faithful almoner of his bounty.

Mr. Norton was a uniform attendant upon the public worship of God's house, and has left a substantial proof of his appreciation of the institutions of Christianity.

His funeral was attended by a large number of his fellow-citizens, who will remember him with respect and gratitude.—*Observer and Reporter.*

eyes fill involuntarily : I can scarce forbear throwing myself at his feet, and entreating him not thus to trifle away his precious moments—moments, alas ! which once gone can never be recalled ! moments for which he might yet be willing to give worlds to recall ! Often when I return home from meeting, I feel as if I could scarce restrain my feelings ; but something, I know not what, chains my tongue, while he little suspects my internal conflicts, and that my affections are thus powerfully exercised. He is *all* to me—all that the fondest heart could wish ; anticipates my wants, and complies with every request ; but even thus amiable, how much closer would the bond of union be drawn, were thought and action to be thus united in the Redeemer's cause, the family altar be reared, and our hearts become temples of God ! How sweetly would our lives glide down the stream of time ! how blissful our reunion in the world to come ! You sympathize with me, dear sister, being similarly related, having an affectionate husband wanting but one thing. I understand Mr. —— is not a professor of religion. I cannot resist the longing desire for my husband to accompany me. It cannot be strange we would wish with Joshua to say, 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.' ”

## CHAPTER X.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE—MENTAL POWERS—ACCOMPLISHMENTS—HOME  
CIRCLE—SERVANTS.

IN early life Mrs. Norton was esteemed beautiful. Of medium stature, erect and elastic, with regular features, full hazel eyes, dark glossy hair, fair complexion, and animated though sedate expression, she challenged admiration. When in conversation, her face was brilliant and her manner engaging. In her later years she was of full habit to the point of fleshiness; rheumatism and other afflictions diminished her action and energy. She was blessed with a remarkable share of common sense, and her love of the humorous and the beautiful were admirably blended with discriminating taste. Her manners were refined and pleasing; all were at home in her company. She had a cordial dislike to ostentation, to frippery, and to *senseless* etiquette. Acquainted with all the rules of courtesy, she detested all affectation of excellence. Wealthy and admired, she scorned attention to wealth for its own sake, and respected only such

as were virtuous. Simple-hearted and sincere, she discarded the friendship of the proud and vain, and sought the society of the lowly in heart, whether rich or poor. Of a meek and quiet spirit, she avoided the fashionable assemblies of gaudy folly, and the vociferous mirth of shallow impudence and voluptuous loquacity. A child of God, she affiliated with Christians. Her apparel was not with "outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing gold;" her conversation was not of idle words, of scandal, nor of "foolish talking and jesting, but modest and chaste, coupled with fear." Her godliness was neither sour nor taciturn, bitter nor supercilious; it was just such as every one admires and loves, and learns to revere.

In defending the doctrines and usages of her Church, few women were ever more courteous or successful. She could talk calmly, clearly, forcibly, and right to the point. She made no pretensions to argumentation, but many were made to respect her views by the clear method in which she stated them: she was decided without in any offensive sense being positive; she was persistent without being dogmatical; and was superior without any flush of triumph. She read extensively, and was well versed in theology, history, philosophy, poetry, and biography. She travelled considerably, and was conversant with people, and manners, and

great objects : she saw and heard much, and treasured all as her own. Cordial towards all Christians, she was a zealous Methodist ; unwavering in her friendships, and attentive to her acquaintances, she condescended to no finesse ; her friendship was never deceitful. If her manners were sometimes cold, it was the result of bodily pain or mental anxiety : her heart was always warm.

Her early education was the best her times afforded, but education was with her the business of her life : she knew the themes of the cottage, and was at home among the palaces of the noble : all respected her knowledge, as well as her benevolence : her admirers were among all ranks of society. Her letters are elegant in style, and superior in matter : written without the least thought of the public eye, they need no elision, suffer nothing from exposure to criticism. She wrote many fugitive pieces on serious themes, both in prose and verse—all breathe the spirit of fervency, piety, and poetry. Unfortunately, her journal is lost, and specimens of her thoughts are wanting to complete this publication.

#### HOME CIRCLE.

The house of Mrs. Norton was a favorite retreat for her friends. Order was observable in all its arrangements. The grounds around were ordered



with attractive taste, and the dwelling for comfort. One of her friends, in 1818, thus speaks of it: "Yesterday I went to look at your solitary abode, my dear Mrs. Norton. In company were Mrs. Anderson, Sidney, John, and Fanny; and solitary indeed it was. I felt as Goldsmith, when describing 'the Deserted Village.' It brought to my mind the many happy hours—I should say weeks—I had spent there with you. I recalled the last time I was there, the last evening you passed there, and wondered when we should spend such another together. I thought the house *itself* looked sad and mournful. On the window in the front room I found a comb—one I had often seen and *used*. I looked at the place where the piano had stood, and recalled the last time I had played on it there. I opened the closets and cupboards—they were quite mouldy from the damp. I rang the bell, which was rather stiff for want of use. O, how many memories it recalled! I pictured you to myself ringing for Stephen to bring apples, hickory nuts, wood for the fire, etc., etc. I saw many other things which made me feel I can't tell how: even the bare floors, the windows, the little room I have so often slept in, all gave me melancholy pleasure. I don't know what I shall do if you don't return soon. I must make up my mind to freeze: wish I could sleep all the winter, as the snakes do."

1825. "MY INESTIMABLE FRIEND:—I sincerely congratulate you on your return to 'that blissful place which bounds your joy;' but that return to your little Eden has robbed us of the charms of your society and conversation. In vain I seek among my friends that *congeniality* of thought, feeling, and taste I found in you. . . . I approve your little reading-class very much. I half envy you. How I myself would love to join the little coterie! Your time must pass pleasantly and usefully away. How much superior are those females who seek inward adorning to those who spend their hours in dress and personal decoration. The few moments spent in visiting are too little devoted to improvement, too much to scandal or the idle news of the day."

Mrs. Norton's house was peculiarly and positively devoted to mental and moral cultivation. The best of books, the choicest themes of conversation, and the most cultivated minds, were always at home there, while the young were invited there for their benefit as well as for pleasure. Did every lady of wealth and professed piety imitate her example, the social circle would indeed be pure and refined; then would its pleasures infinitely surpass the material mirth of the senseless dance, and the animal excitements of wine and cards.

Mr. and Mrs. Norton were both devoted to the

temperance cause, and their efforts will be felt long and happily by the youth within the sphere of their influence. They gave no wine to their guests, nor had brandy or cordial on their sideboard. They asserted that if friendship must be purchased and perpetuated by intoxicating beverages, they were not in the market as purchasers. There was no stinginess in this abandonment of drinks, as their abundant table and refreshments of other kinds bore witness : they were the avowed friends of temperance from principle, and were neither ashamed to own it, nor did they care for the low hiss of opposition. Independent as the air, they were true as steel to their vows.

In ordering domestic affairs, Mrs. Norton never permitted any needless extravagance or wastefulness. Her servants were controlled firmly and mildly ; they were cleanly and comfortable in abode and apparel, and, above all, their religious culture was attended to effectually : she enjoyed their reverence and devoted affection.

All things considered, few homes are as happy as was Mrs. Norton's. The extinction of its light has left many in gloom, and the fall of its pillars leaves thousands to regret, and many to tears.

## CHAPTER XI.

## LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH.

“Leaves have their time to fall,  
And flowers to wither at the north wind’s breath;  
And stars to set; but all—  
Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O Death.”

DAY has its morning, noon, and evening shadows. The seasons bud, and blossom, and decay. Spring brightens into summer; summer ripens into autumn, and winter spreads its silent robe of snow upon the sepulchre of all. So mortals pass from dimpled childhood to life’s maturity; then strength and beauty sink into the lonely quiet of the cloud that shrouds the margin of eternity. To the sinner death appears an endless sleep; or, startled by the thunders of the storm upon the boundless sea before him, he grows restless upon his dying-pillow, and shrieks in vain for help. In either case “the wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous has hope in his death.”

“How sweet the scene when Christians die,  
When holy souls retire to rest:  
How mildly beams the closing eye,  
How gently heaves the expiring breast!”

Their pilgrimage may have been an arduous warfare : conflicting and often agonizing hopes and fears may have broken their peace ; but “the great fight of afflictions” ended, they are ready for their departure, with a strange solicitude. Their faces are undimmed by shadows :

“Triumphant smiles the victor’s brow,  
Fanned by some guardian angel’s wing.”

The firmament may have been dark with perpetual clouds ; the bark may have wrestled with the giant spirit of the tempest through a more than arctic voyage ; the day may have wept with showers of sorrow, and scarce a calm have given respite from the sickening roll of tumultuous billows ; but when the Christian is about to leave all behind, it is a privilege to mark the transition in his expressive features, and hear the cheerful shout he raises on the sounding banks of Jordan : he dies gloriously.

“So fades a summer cloud away ;  
So sinks the gale when storms are o’er ;  
So gently shuts the eye of day ;  
So dies a wave along the shore.”

As travellers crossing the same wild river at different fordings are surrounded by different scenery and dangers, so Christians at different times and places, crossing the same flood to the land of promise, are in sight of diverse landscapes of the same boundless inheritance, and experience diversified

emotions of glory. Sometimes the sky is cloudless and serene, and summer beauties charm the soul away. Again, the spirit seems gradually transformed from darkness into light, as a lone cloud puts on the brightest hues of crimson, gold, and purple when the spreading rays of sunset fill the firmament with softened light.

Again it trembles with excitement, while the wrath of a dreadful storm, moving earth and air, sweeps along the howling main and shaking hills. But when the loftier thunders announce the retiring tempest, and the sun on the horizon bursts through its rifted banners of wrath; when fields, and floods, and heavens glitter in the dazzling blaze, and brilliant arches span the firmament, then hope claps her glad hands, and sings exulting on the steeps, in sight of Canaan's rest, and longs to launch away.

Anon the morning dawns upon the Christian warrior, as did the sun to Israel camped on Jordan's side. The trumpets sound. The dissolved tabernacle leads the van, with angel pioneers. Their feet are at the water's edge. The overflowing stream divides. The current pauses in a turbid wall, and silently, as if in reverence, bids the sacred band pass on in safety to the realms of the emancipated saints of God. As the Hebrew, after forty years of desert life, beheld his long-sought

home, with thrilling joy and bursting tears of hope, close to fruition, so the child of promise exults when his immortal home appears in view.

In the month of August, 1856,\* Mrs. Norton was

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\* A TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF DEPARTED WORTH.—Mrs. Sarah Norton, late consort of John Norton, Esq., of Lexington, Ky., is no more of earth! She departed this life, in prospect of a blissful immortality, on the 25th ultimo, although the sad intelligence did not reach us at this place, in a tangible form, until within the last few days. We have felt the stroke as we seldom feel on such occasions. Having at different periods in the course of the last thirty-five years sustained to her the relation of pastor, and, during those periods, having shared largely in the benefits of her counsel, and other kindred acts of Christian beneficence, as well in the later as the earlier years of our ministry, we must be allowed to pause and throw off for a moment the overwhelming cares and solitudes of our position for the purpose of paying a last humble tribute of respect to the memory of one whose whole life was but a continuous exemplification of her many Christian virtues and elevated attainments.

If we are correctly advised, she attached herself, when very young, to the Methodist Episcopal Church in York, Pa., under the ministry of the Rev. Robert R. Roberts—afterwards Bishop Roberts. Some years after this, in June, 1807, she was happily united in marriage to her surviving companion. From Pennsylvania they removed to the West, and finally settled in Lexington, Ky., where they continued to reside up to the time of her death; from which it will appear that she must have been a member of the Methodist Church for more than half a century; during the whole of which period she was known and read of all who were favored with her acquaintance as a woman of noble and generous bearing, and of great moral and religious worth. She was, in all respects, a lady of special mark and distinction.

Her superior intelligence, unquestionable piety, general benevolence, and conciliatory manners, rendered her the object of universal respect and esteem among all with whom she associated. Catholic in spirit, liberal and charitable in sentiment and feeling towards



called to a bed of sickness, and of excruciating pain—the last she was to know. In childhood she

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those with whom she differed in her religious opinions, she was nevertheless devotedly attached to the Church of her early choice. In fine, she was, from conviction, a decided Methodist; and, as such, she anxiously desired and earnestly labored, in her legitimate sphere, for the promotion of a cause which she had reason to regard as involving the best interests of the world. Her zeal was enlightened, consistent, and in perfect keeping with the high and holy interests of the great enterprise with which she was identified.

She died as she had lived—a Christian in the highest and holiest sense of that term. Jesus Christ, and him crucified, was the only ground of her faith and hope, and, consequently, the only and all-sufficient source of her consolation and triumph. His truth, his cause, his Church, and his people, shared largely in the purest and best affections of her heart.

In her death the Church has sustained an irreparable loss, one that must be deeply and extensively felt; a loss that will not, perhaps, be soon repaired. Long years will have passed away ere the Methodist Church in Lexington, Ky., will “look upon her like again.” In her death society has been deprived of one of its most “loved and valued members.” A “bright and burning light” has been extinguished, never to be rekindled in this “theatre of crime, and exile of misery.”

No more will her presence grace the spacious halls of her hospitable mansion, or add to the beauty and loveliness of the rich and fragrant fruits and flowers of her splendid garden walks. No more will her presence animate the devotions of the sanctuary, or cheer the hearts of the poor, afflicted, and disconsolate of earth.

A mother in Israel, beloved, admired, and revered by all, is gone: gone from this scene of labor and conflict, of turmoil and strife, to her long-sought home “far up in the skies.”

Let us, then, not sorrow as those that have no hope; but, believing that Jesus died and rose again, let us confidently hope and diligently prepare for the coming of that joyous day in which the friends of Jesus shall meet to part no more for ever.

With the bereaved husband we deeply sympathize, having drunk

had joined the company of strangers and pilgrims on their way to "the city which hath foundations." Now, from

"The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,  
And streaming light through chinks which time had made,"

she saw that she was pausing in the land of Beulah. Now, amid the occasional rests from agony, she glanced at the end of her journey, and the language of her heart was thrilling:

"I'm almost home! my skies are clear:

The shadowy hills of blue,  
On which I've pondered many a year,  
Sublimely heave in view.

My glorious home! Thy mansions fair  
In mystic beauty rise;  
Dome over dome, and spire on spire,  
Are glittering through the skies.

Immortal home! Thy holy song  
Floats over warbling streams;  
And angel watchers still prolong  
The murmur through my dreams."

Around her bedside stood her husband, her intimate friends, her classmates, and neighbors. In silence anon they wept her near departure, or gave

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from the same bitter cup. May God sustain him in his great affliction, is the earnest prayer of our heart. E. STEVENSON.

*Nashville, August 27, 1856.*

P. S.—A well-written biographical sketch of this excellent lady, if brought out in a permanent form, would be the instrument of accomplishing much good. Who that knew her well, and rightly appreciated her worth, will undertake the work?

utterance to sobs and groans. That she must die was too soon a well-known truth, and all felt anxious to know or witness the triumph of one so long a useful Christian. There were, however, no extraordinary manifestations of victory. Her strength was firm, her faith unshaken, and her hope secure. Her peace was as a river, and her departure a solid victory over death and sin. Her testimony for Christ had been *a good life*, and extraordinary manifestations of salvation were reserved till she should pass the gates of light, and receive "the administration of an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of God her Saviour." Her prostration by disease prevented her seeing many friends, or conversing much with any one; yet so far as she did express her feelings, they afforded strong consolation. Her pastor visited her frequently, and Mrs. Higgins and Mrs. Kennard were with her very often. To Mrs. Kennard she said, "I have been reviewing the past, and though I know I have been an unworthy, slothful Christian, yet I have not a doubt of my acceptance with God through the atonement."

She was in the habit of having a loaf of bread baked, and sent regularly to an aged servant of God; and a day or two previous to her death, Mrs. Kennard observed to her, that notwithstanding her sufferings, she had not forgotten to send Miss ——

her loaf. Said she, "No; the Lord never forgot me, and I will try and not forget his poor."

To a dear unconverted friend she said, "O what should I now do in my prostrate condition had I put off my soul's salvation to this deathbed! My peace, blessed be the Saviour's name, has long been made with God, and I now have nothing to do but wait his summons to call me to himself. O, my dear friend, seek the Lord while in health: delay it not to a dying-hour."

"A few hours before her death she became speechless; but a calm, peaceful frame pervaded her whole spirit—then died Mrs. Sarah Norton, very remarkable in life and in death for her simple, strong, and inflexible faith in her adorable Saviour."\* Mortality has its woes; but the rest of immortality meets the pious at the dying-hour:

"Now just at home, the fanning wings  
Of breezy incense play,  
Softer than pleasure's music brings,  
And charms the soul away."

In her departure the aged and poor have lost a ministering angel of love. They mourn for her as for a friend whose charity never failed, whose presence was light, whose voice was music, and whose heart was compassion. At her footsteps the blossoms of hope revived among the disconsolate: by

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\* Extract from a letter of W. King.

her the sick were visited, the naked clothed, and the hungry refreshed. Imbued with the spirit of her Master, she strove to follow his example, and has arisen from the Olivet of peace to behold his face on the mount of God. Who will succeed to her ministry? Who will send bread to the poor she can feed no longer?

Her church will miss her when they meet to worship in the class, the prayer-meeting, and the congregation. Memory will regret that she is no more; and in many an eye, turned to the seat she filled, will the gathering tear speak of the fond affection in which she was held. The aged will behold her in the skies, and long to be with her in the courts above; and youth will hear of her virtues, to be inspired with the spirit of kindness. The ministers who knew her will visit Lexington, and remember her hospitable home, and feel sad at the loss of such a friend to the Church and to humanity. What Methodist that knew her well ever thinks of her city without beholding her in fancy, or viewing her by faith in the house above? Often as they retrace her old paths, will the forms and voices of others suggest her presence, and reveries of the past will be dissolved in pain as many awake to the sad realization that she is in the tomb.

Her friends will visit her dwelling, and be reminded that she is not there. The associations of

her presence linger in all the walks of her abode, and drape the trees, and shrubs, and flowers so sedulously nourished by her care; but they live only to cast a sombre shade over the hearts of those who loved her and shared her affection. Will they behold her again? Will they walk with her in white? Will they share a mutual mansion in the paradise of God? Many of her admirers are in the walks of affluence, surrounded by temptations to disclaim a life of piety and active benevolence; but in her they have an example that the rich may be pious and eminently useful, and reach the eternal world with joy.

Mrs. Norton may be dead, but her life is left behind her, speaking softly to the young and the gay to embrace religion in youth, and live for heaven. She may be dead, yet, standing by her grave, we feel as if among angels who come to guard her sweet repose. Her lips are silent, and her eye has lost its lustre, but we hear her voice sounding from the excellent glory, and exchange glances, as she looks down from the windows of heaven. As the star is hidden from common sight by the brightness of the sun, so she is not dead, though departed: beyond the firmament she is radiant with life: she is not lost, but only hidden by the glory that enfeebles the eyes of mortals by its blinding splendor. Ages may roll on over her dust,

and the heavens may flood the earth with showers of desolation, but the last thunder of the curse will at length hush its moan in the clang of the trumpet that shall proclaim the release from the sepulchre. Then on the universal horizon shall appear the panorama of angels, and the glory of the Lord shall lighten the skies. Then immortal fragrance will breathe destruction to the pestilence. Disease will sicken and die. The simple voice that hushed the seas will send its melody into the ear of the Christian. The living and the dead will be transformed and live. Then will the familiar face and voice of our sister again greet us. We will witness her coronation, and once more familiarly visit her mansion, and unite with her in ascribing glory and dominion to God and the Lamb for ever. Amen.

THE END.





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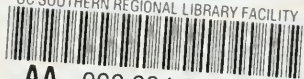
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